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あしたのジョー 14
KC
原作／高森朝雄
漫画／ちばてつや

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★★★★★★★

後楽園特設リングを血に染めて、ジョーとリベラの凄惨な死闘がつづく！　傷だらけの野性児矢吹丈の激動の青春を、圧倒的な迫力と感動で描く、大傑作ボクシング巨編待望の第十四巻！

★★★★★★★

オリジナルデザイン／水野石文
（水野プロダクション）

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14

あしたのジョー

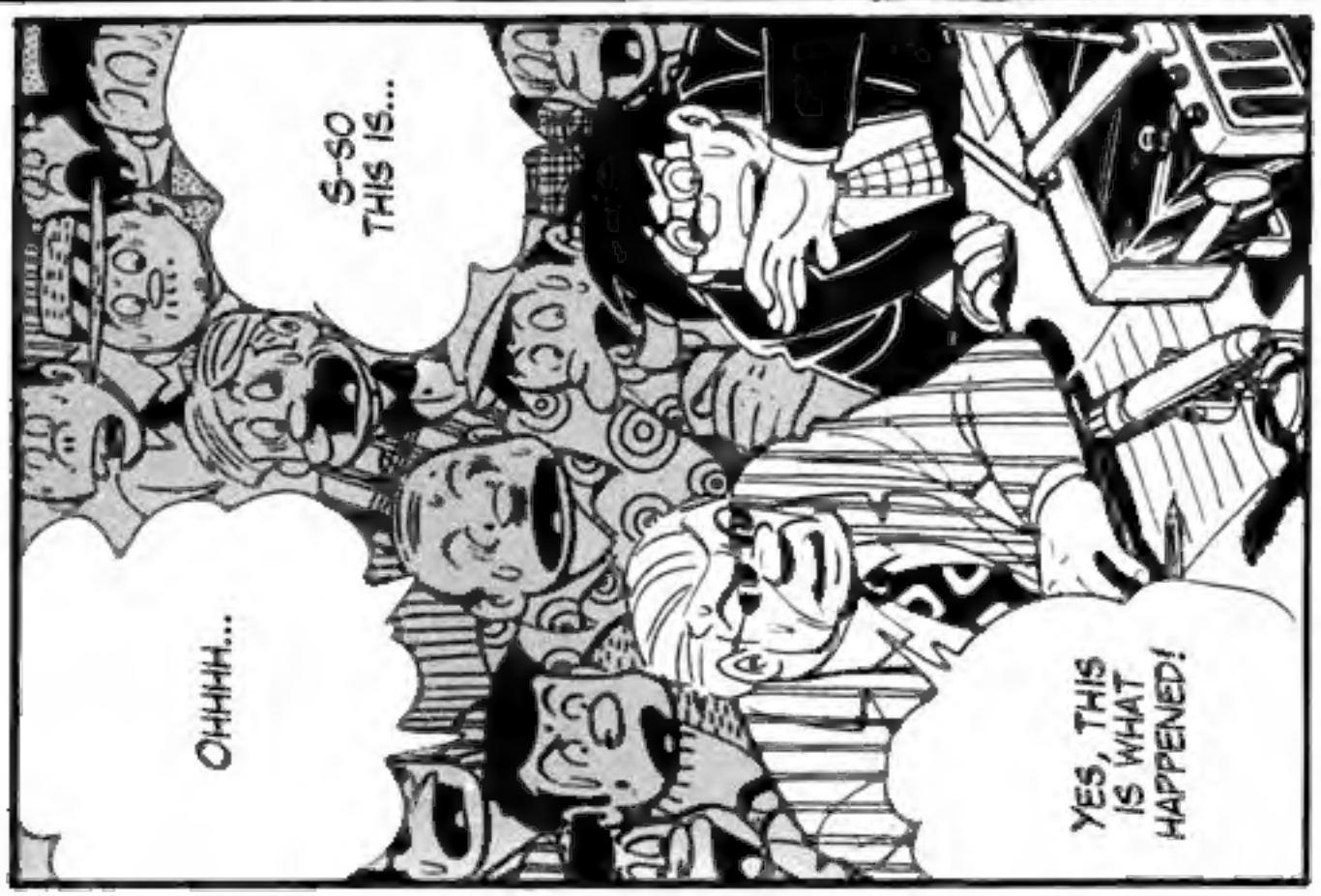
Written by Asao Takamori (Kajiwara Ikki)
Drawn by Chiba Tetsuya

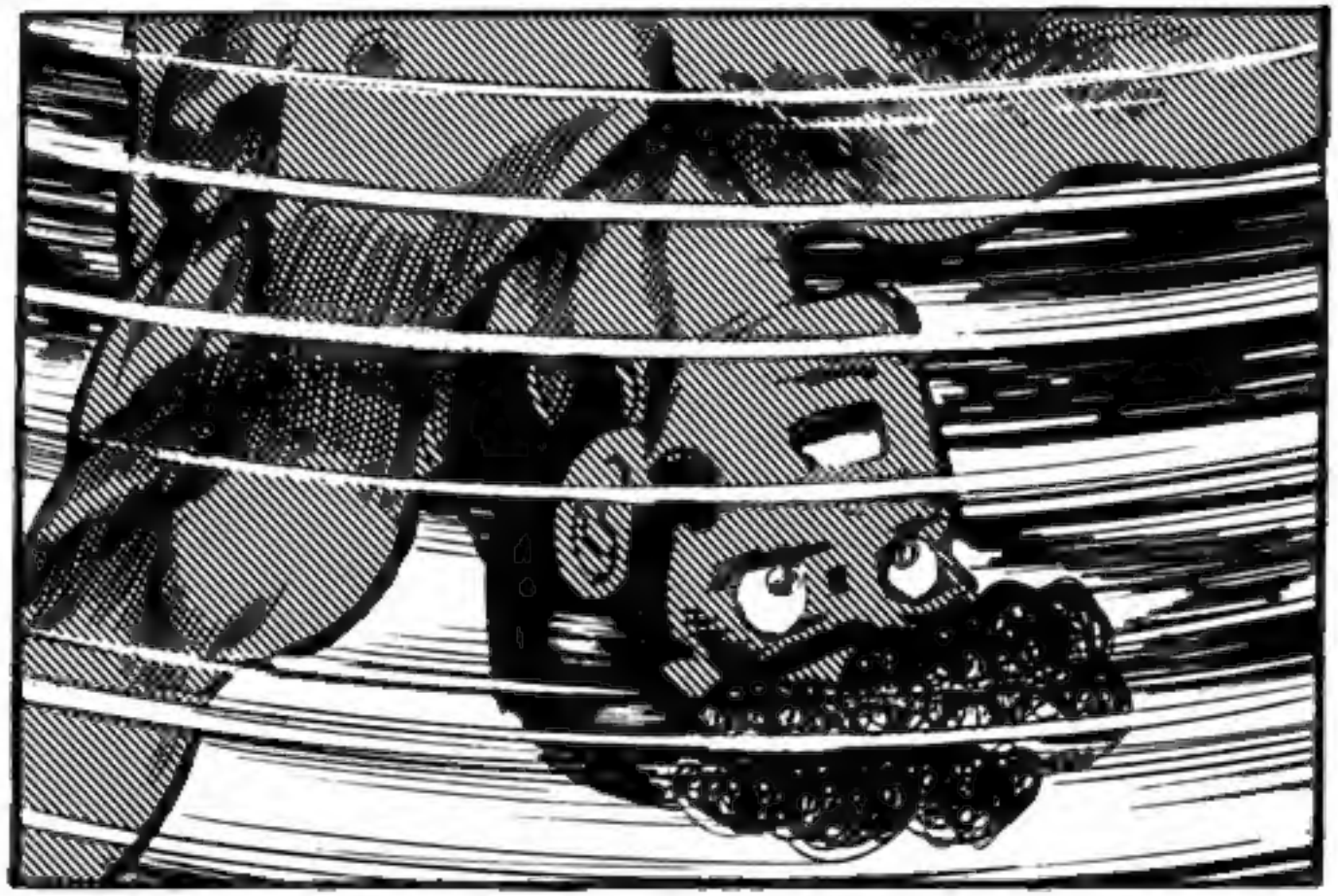
矢吹丈は、〝殺し屋〟の異名をもつ人気ボクサーだったが、宿敵の力石徹をリング上で死なせたショックから得意の必殺パンチを失い、ドサまわりのボクサーにおちぶれていた。

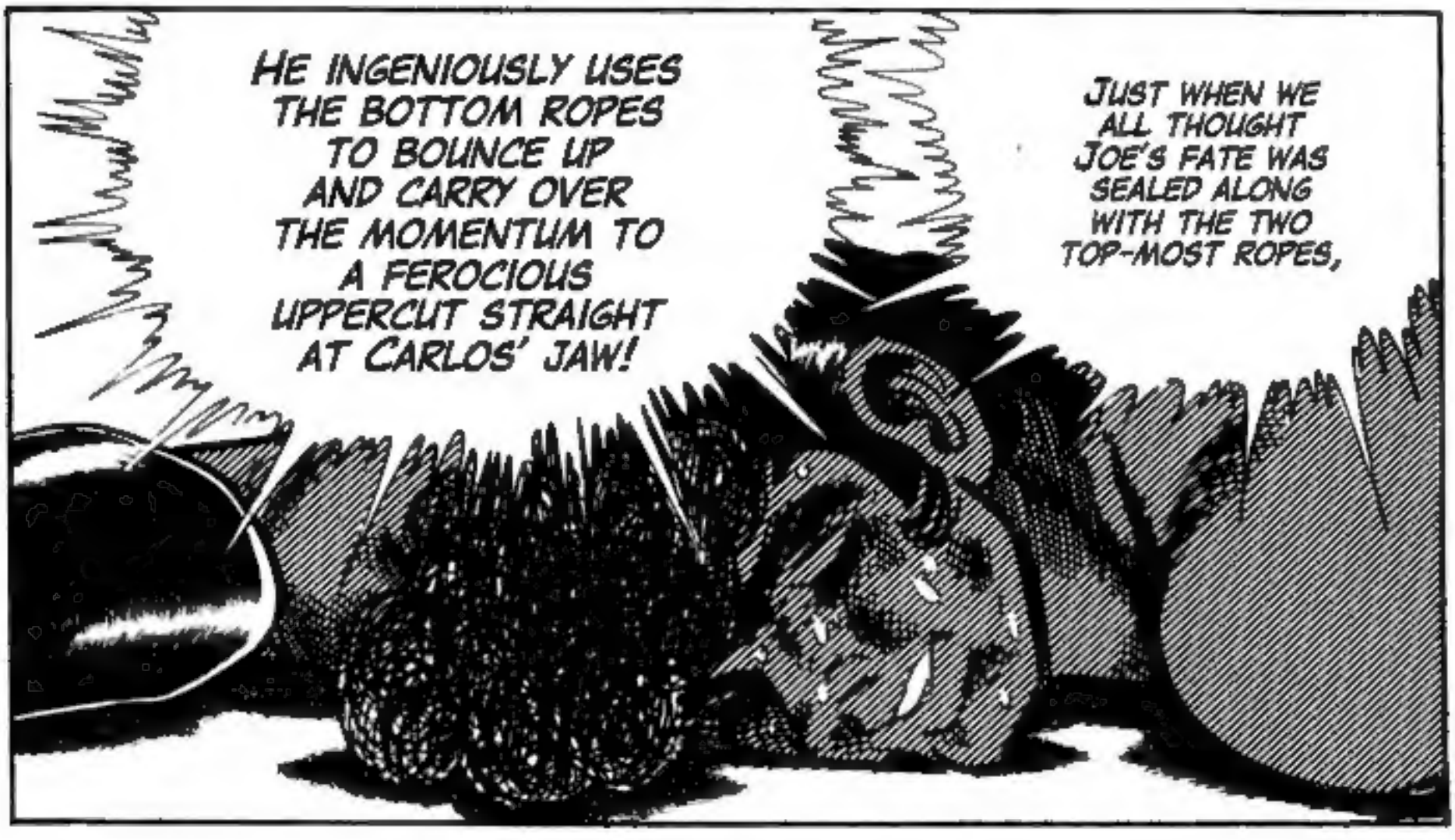
折から南米ベネズエラから、世界六位の強豪カーロス・リベラが来日し、かつて丈が対戦したボクサーたちと対戦したが、丈は試合にかくされたリベラの恐るべき底力を見ぬき、異常な闘志をかきたてられ、白木ジム会長の白木葉子を訪ねてリベラとの対戦を申し入れた。

葉子の特別のはからいで、丈対リベラの十回戦は後楽園球場の特設リングで行われたが、〝野性の男〟によみがえった丈は、不屈の闘志でリベラに立ち向かいたがいにダウンの応酬をくり返す熱戦を展開して満員の観衆を湧かせた……。

★前巻までのあらすじ★


OHHHH...
S-SO THIS IS...
YES, THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED!




HE INGENIOUSLY USES THE BOTTOM ROPES TO BOUNCE UP AND CARRY OVER THE MOMENTUM TO A FEROCIOUS UPPERCUT STRAIGHT AT CARLOS' JAW!
JUST WHEN WE ALL THOUGHT JOE'S FATE WAS SEALED ALONG WITH THE TWO TOP-MOST ROPES,

BUT I NEVER IMAGINED THAT THIS IS WHAT HE ACTUALLY PULLED OFF IN AN INSTANT...!

I THOUGHT I SAW YABUKI'S BODY SINKING BELOW FOR A MOMENT,

WHAT A BOXER, YABUKI IS...

IF THAT WIMP TRIES TO CLINCH YOU AGAIN IN THE NEXT ROUND, SEND HIS ASS FLYIN'!

KEEP IT UP, YABUKI!

HAHA...

33

EVEN A MONSTER LIKE CARLOS WOULD DEFINITELY HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO CLINCH AFTER TAKING A HIT LIKE THAT.

IF JOE KEEPS THIS UP, HE MIGHT EVEN TAKE THIS MATCH!

THE NAMELESS UNDERDOG MIGHT REALLY BECOME A WORLD RANKED FIGHTER AT THIS RATE!

I BEG TO DIFFER...

HA...

THAT WAS PROOF THAT CARLOS RIVERA THE BEAST'S FINALLY BARED HIS ENTIRE SELF.

ACTIN' LIKE A GIRL GRABBING AN' PULLING ON HAIRS... TALK ABOUT CHEAP!

HMPH... CAN'T BELIEVE THE GREAT CARLOS RIVERA RESORTED TO CHEAP CLINCHING.

THEN THEY'LL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO RECOVER, NO MATTER HOW "SHAMEFUL" OR "COWARDLY" IT MIGHT LOOK TO OTHERS!

WHEN THEY SENSE AN OPENING, THEIR INSTINCTS DRIVE THEM TO KILL MERCILESSLY. BUT IF THEY'RE IN DANGER,

REAL BEASTS DON'T CARE ABOUT FLASHY PRETENSES OR BLUFFS.

REALLY HAVE TO PUT A WET BLANKET ON THIS OLD MAN'S HEART AND GET HIM PANICKING AGAIN...?

D... DO YOU...

I'M MORE CONCERNED WITH WHAT'LL HAPPEN WHEN HE RECOVERS.

ドオン

THAT'S WHY...

SHUT YOUR YAPPING.

SO USE THAT IN THE NEXT ROUND T-

IN ANY CASE, THE ROAD IS CLEAR NOW THAT WE KNOW THE ROPE-TACTICS WILL STILL WORK!

I'LL USE EVERY LAST OUNCE OF MY STRENGTH TO HAVE THIS FIGHT LIVE UP TO ITS EXPECTATIONS!

THERE AIN'T NO MORE NEED FOR PETTY TRICKS LIKE THAT.

WE'RE BUT TWO WOUNDED BEASTS OUT THERE.

HAHA... THE ONLY THING LEFT IS JUST A PURE OL' FASHIONED BRAWL...

CARLOS... ARE YOU GOOD TO GO...?

"EEE"

ALL SECONDS OUT! THAT INCLUDES YOU, MR. ROBERT!

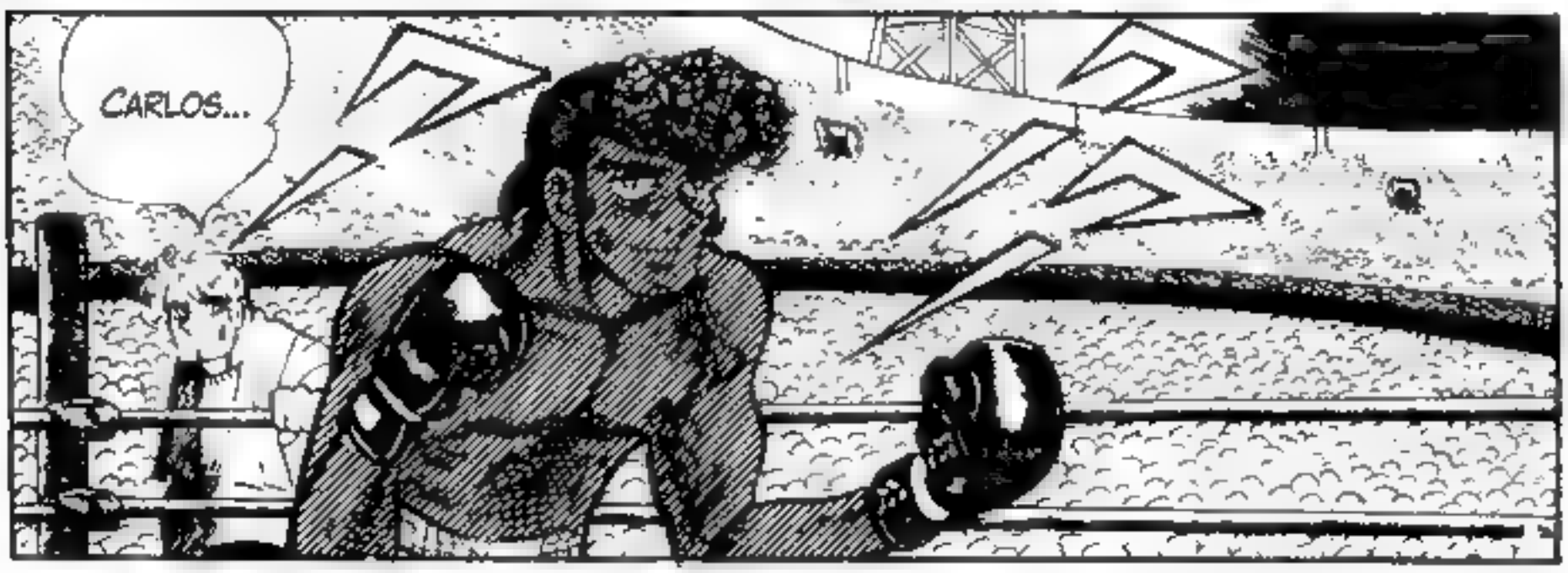
OH...

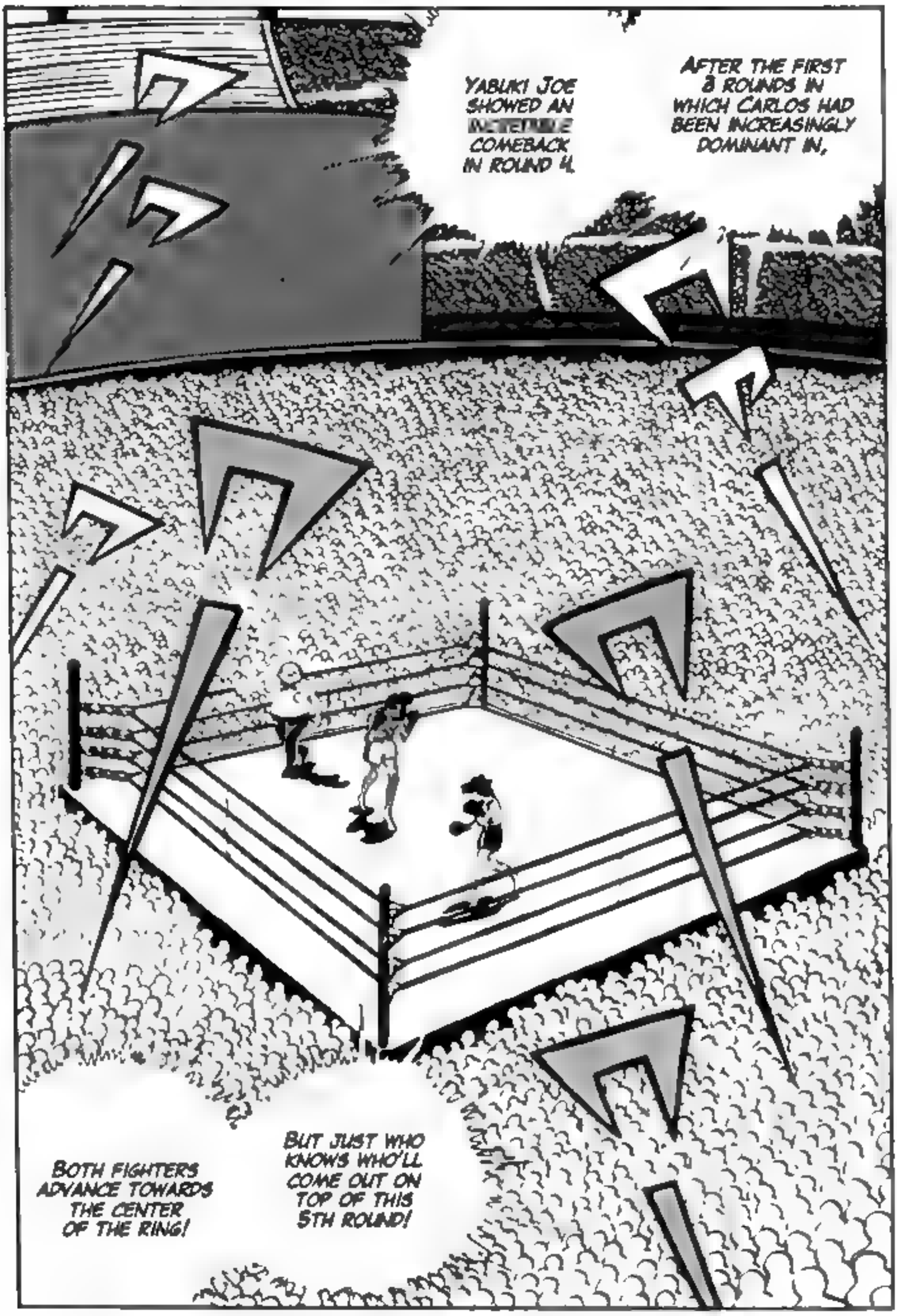
CARLOS ...!?

HEY, CARLOS!

W-WHAT'S WRONG? YOUR EYES ARE...

THIS ROUND'S YOUR VERY CHANCE TO STEP ONTO THE WORLD-STAGE!
GIVE IT TO HIM JUST LIKE IN ROUND 4!
YOU CAN DO IT, BRAWLER JOE!


CARLOS...


YABUKI JOE SHOWED AN [redacted] COMEBACK IN ROUND 4.
AFTER THE FIRST 3 ROUNDS IN WHICH CARLOS HAD BEEN INCREASINGLY DOMINANT IN,
BOTH FIGHTERS ADVANCE TOWARDS THE CENTER OF THE RING!
BUT JUST WHO KNOWS WHO'LL COME OUT ON TOP OF THIS 5TH ROUND!

ATTA BOY!

C'MON, JOE!

HMM... AS I SUSPECTED, A MERE MINUTE OF REST MUST NOT HAVE BEEN ENOUGH TIME FOR CARLOS TO RECOVER.

HIS ELBOW LOOKS SHAKY OUT THERE.

OHHH! JOE SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN THE LEAD WITH THOSE JABS FOLLOWED BY A STRONG HOOK!

KEEP ON ATTACKING!

WAAAAAA

DON'T LET UP, JOE!

ALRIGHT!

AH-

....

WHAT'S UP WITH THAT LOOK...

W-

HE LOOKS... LIKE A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT CARLOS...

HURRY UP AND KO HIS ASS!

WHY'D YA STOP ATTACKIN'!?

WHAT'S THE MATTER!?

PANT

PANT

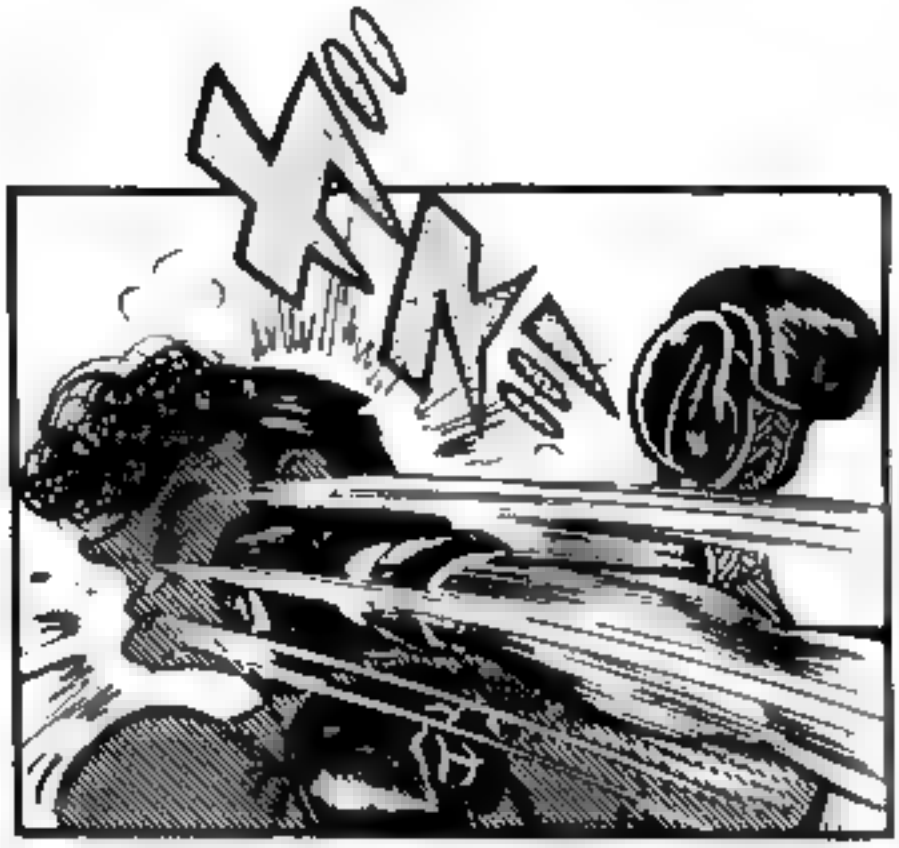
PANT

F-FIGHT!

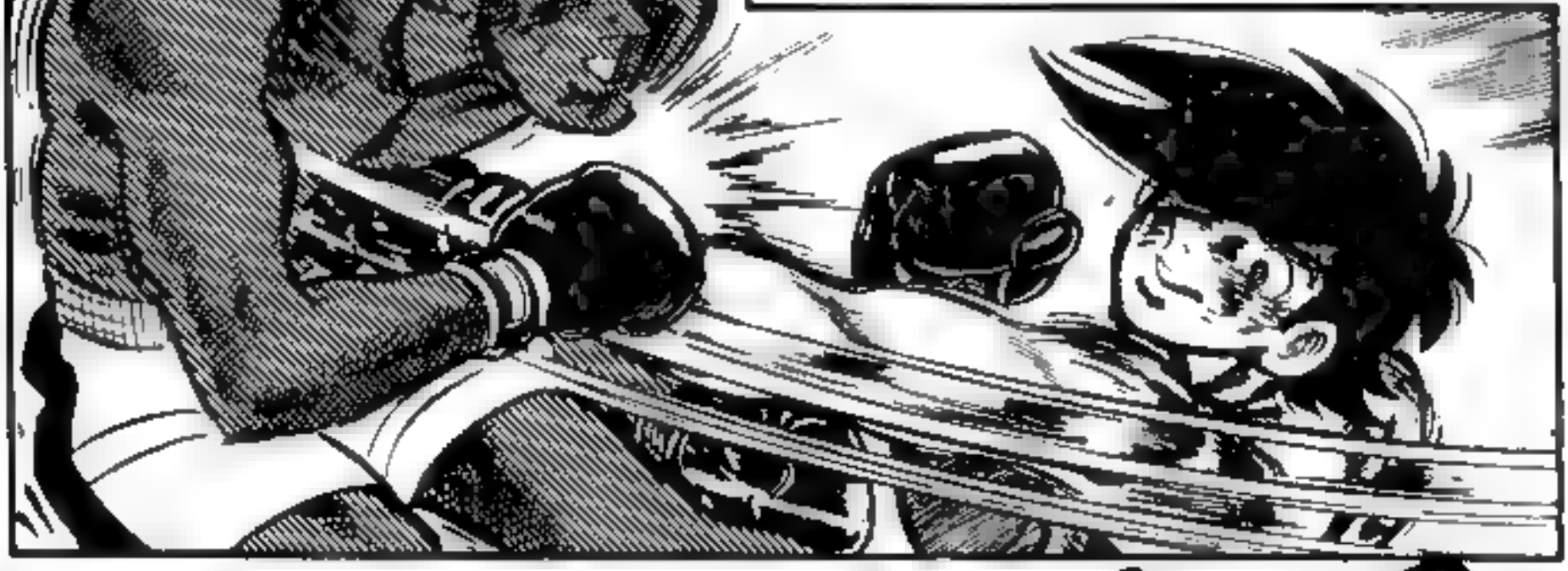
. . . .

I SAID FIGHT, YOU TWO!

GAHHHH-



TAKE
THIS!



HEH...

SINCE BEING ON THE SOLE RECEIVING END, CARLOS HITS JOE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THIS ROUND!

AHHH! CARLOS STRIKES BACK!

DAMN IT!
D-

A-
AGHHH!
ACK-

HOO

THIS IS...

TURNING MORE INTO A BRAWL THAN A BOXING MATCH!

YES...

WHOA, WHOA!

WHAT'S UP WITH THAT HIT JUST NOW!?

CARLOS!

C'MON! THAT WAS CLEARLY AN ELBOW STRIKE!

HEY, REF! THAT WAS A PENALTY!

I SAID STOP, CARLOS!

STOP!

GIVE HIM A PENALTY ALREADY FOR GOD'S SAKE, REF!

FIRST HE DOES AN OVERHEAD SMASH, NEXT HE DOES AN ELBOW STRIKE!

WHAT'S UP WITH THIS BASTARD!?

I CAME HERE TO SEE A BOXER, NOT A THUG!

HEH... NOT ANYTHING SERIOUS ENOUGH FOR YOUR HOLINESS TO WORRY ABOUT...

ARE YOU ALRIGHT, YABUKI!?

JUST WHEN I THOUGHT I'D START THE BRAWL OFF, HE GOES OFF AND TAKES THE LEAD...

BUT I HAVE TO SAY, THAT DID SURPRISE ME...

ANOTHER STUNT LIKE THAT, AND IT'LL BE AN IMMEDIATE POINT REDUCTION!

CARLOS!

DO YOU UNDER-STAND?

RESUME FIGHT!

ALRIGHT THEN!

NOT BAD, CARLOS.

HEH HEH.

KILL THAT FOULING SON OF A BITCH!

COME ON, YABUKI!

LET'S GO, JOE!

WHOA-

CLOSE...

THAT WAS A HEAD-BUTT!
AGHHH-

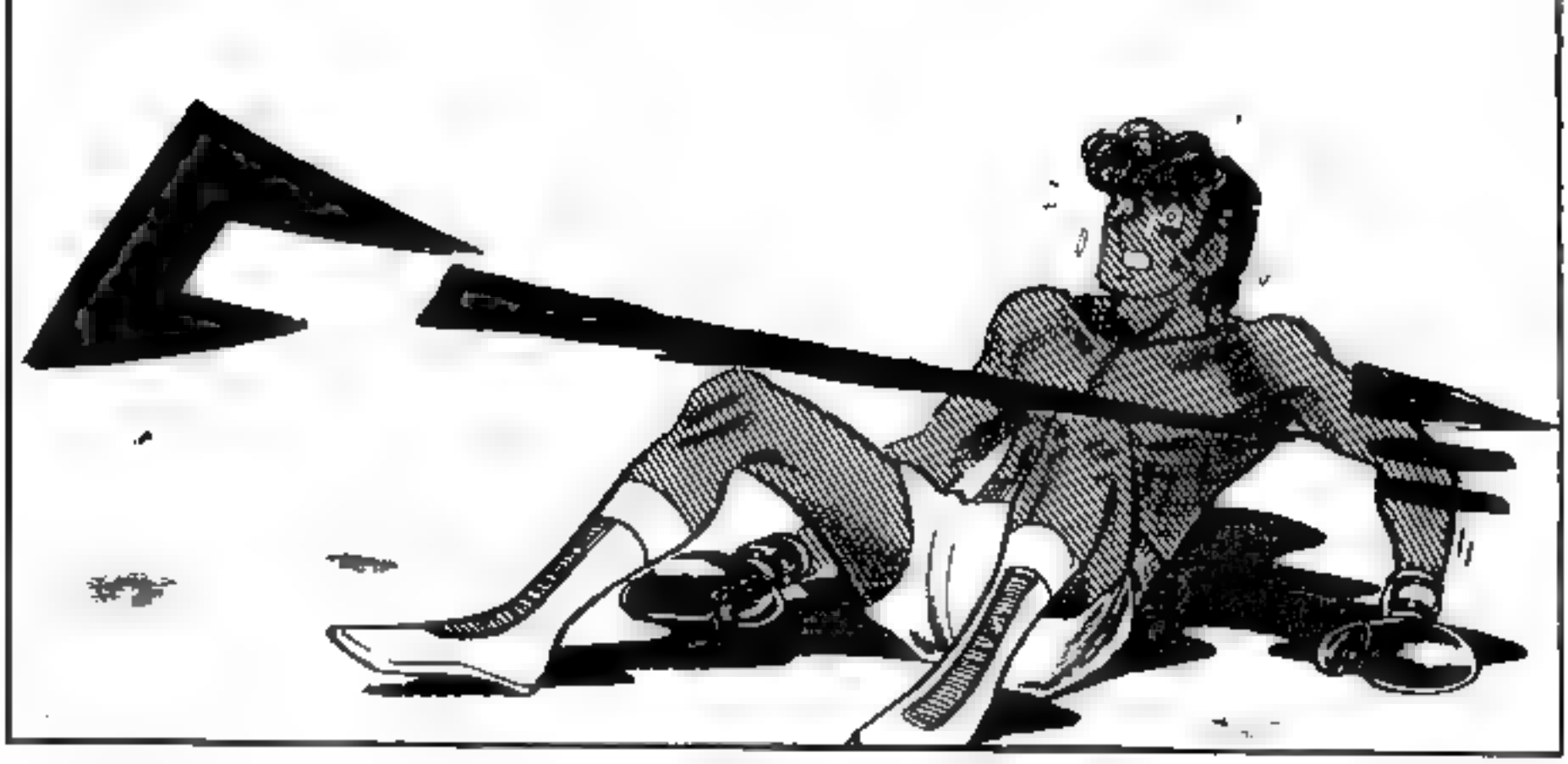
W-WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE-

WHAM!

WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT! THIS TIME, IT'S YABUKI JOE WITH THE OUTRAGEOUS ILLEGAL HITS!

O-OH MY...

AGHHH!



WHAT THE HELL ARE THOSE TWO PLAYIN' AT!?
W... WHAT-WHAT-WHAT'S GOING ON?

WHAAAA...

AHH-

JOE, YOU IDIOT!

OH, I AM FIGHTING SERIOUSLY...

NGHH!

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA!?

FIGHT SERIOUSLY!

AND ANOTHER ONE!

ANOTHER ONE POINT REDUCTION!

A POINT REDUCTION FOR YABUKI!

KEEP MOUTHING OFF LIKE THAT, AND I'LL DEDUCT ANOTHER 3 POINTS!

THAT'S BECAUSE YOU SHOWED ABSOLUTELY NO SIGN OF REDRESSING YOUR CONDUCT!

HEY, HEY. COME ON NOW. CARLOS FOULED TOO AND YOU LET HIM OFF WITH A WARNING.

I TOLD YOU ALREADY, WE ARE FIGHTING SERIOUSLY...

FINE, WHATEVER.

FIGHT ON!

I WANT A SERIOUS FIGHT, BOTH OF YOU!

ZZZZZ
LOLOLO
A''
WAH

AGHHH! THERE HE GOES AGAIN WITH ANOTHER ELBOW STRIKE!

NGH-

A DIRECT HIT ON YABUKI!

AND A HEAD-BUTT FROM CARLOS!

AHHH! THIS TIME, IT'S CARLOS WITH THE ELBOW!

HOLY MOLY... THIS IS A PENALTY-BONANZA...

HE'S LOST IT...

OH GOD...

HE'S COMPLETELY LOST IT... ALL THE TRAINING WE DID... ALL THE TIME WE'VE SPENT HONING HIS TECHNIQUES... ALL GONE DOWN THE DRAIN...

HE'S...

AHH! CARLOS' MOUTH-PIECE GOES FLYING!

BUT YABUKI'S NOT DOWN JUST YET! HE RETURNS WITH AN ELBOW STRIKE FROM BELOW!

HE'S GONE BACK TO BEING THE POOR HOODLUM FIGHTING GANGSTERS IN THE SLUMS OF VENEZUELA AGAIN...
WHY...
WHY, CARLOS!?
HE'S GONE BACK TO BEING THE SAME PUNK GETTING INTO FIGHTS WHEREVER HE GOES...
JOE'S LOST HIS MARBLES! HE'S FORGOTTEN ALL THAT WORK FOR A BETTER TOMORROW...
N-NISHI,
AND YABUKI'S MOUTH-PIECE GOES FLYING TOO!
BOTH PLAYERS' FACES ARE BLOODIED! THE FIGHT'S NOW TURNED INTO A FRENZIED BRAWL!

HOW... EXQUI-SITE...

PARDON?

HOW CAN THIS BE...?

SOMEHOW... THEIR FIGHT SEEMS SO PURE THAT I FEEL UTTERLY ABSORBED...

EVEN THOUGH BOTH PLAYERS ARE BLATANTLY DISREGARDING ALL RULES OF BOXING, FOR SOME REASON, NONE OF IT LOOKS CHEAP NOR DIRTY...

N-
NOW
THAT YOU
MENTION
IT...
KOOW

A HUGE ELBOW SMASH FROM CARLOS SENDS YABUKI SPRAWLED ACROSS THE RING!

AHHH, YABUKI IS DOWN!

HEH HEH.

S-STOP RIGHT THERE, CARLOS!

I SAID STOP!

GET BACK TO YOUR CORNER THIS INSTANT!

OR DID A WORLD-RANKING BOXER LIKE YOU EVEN FORGET SUCH A BASIC RULE LIKE THAT!

ARE YOU INSANE!? HE'S CLEARLY DOWN!

OOF!

WHOAAA!

W-
WHAAAT!?

HEH.

DID YOU SEE CARLOS JUST NOW!?

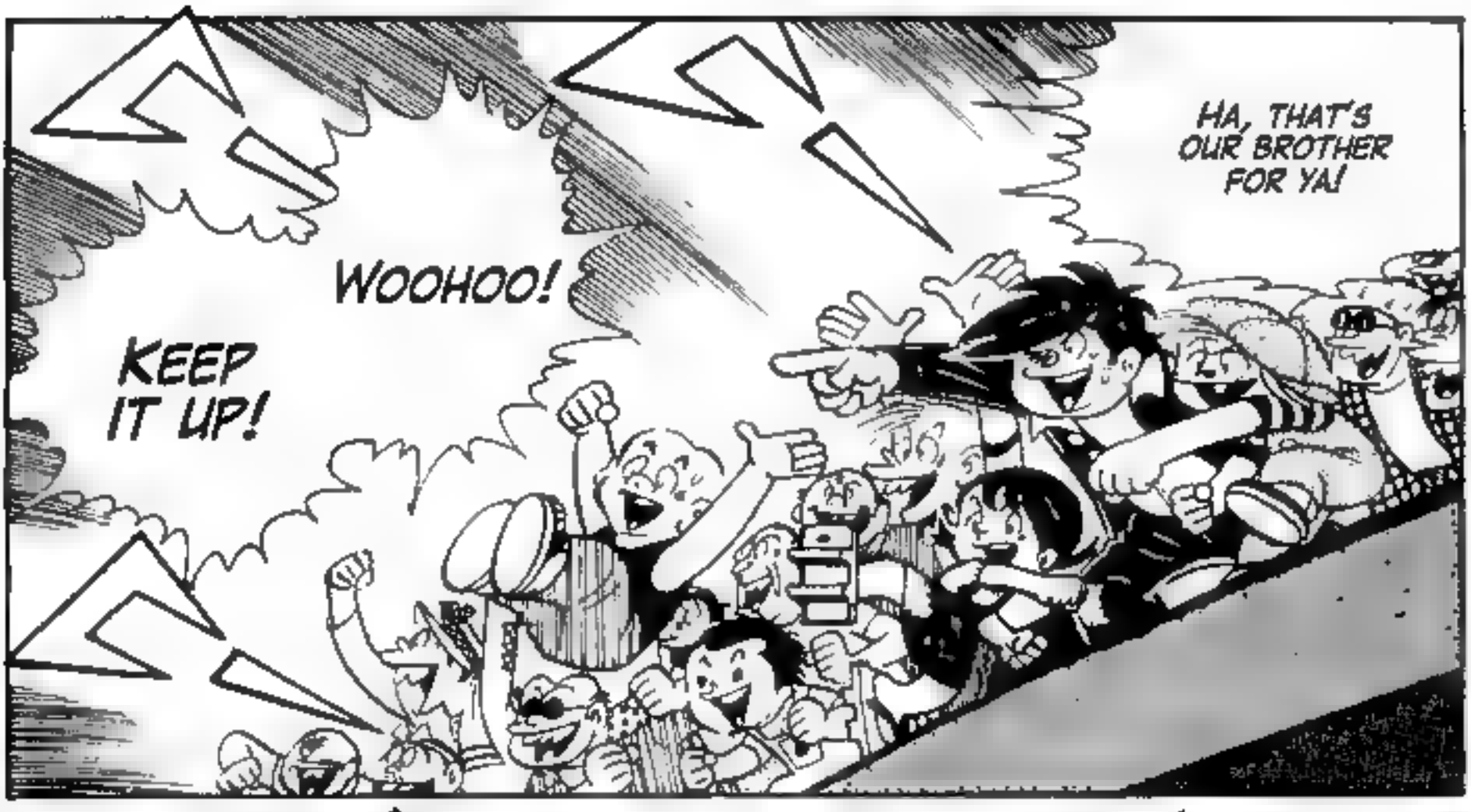
OOF-

D...
DAMN YOU...

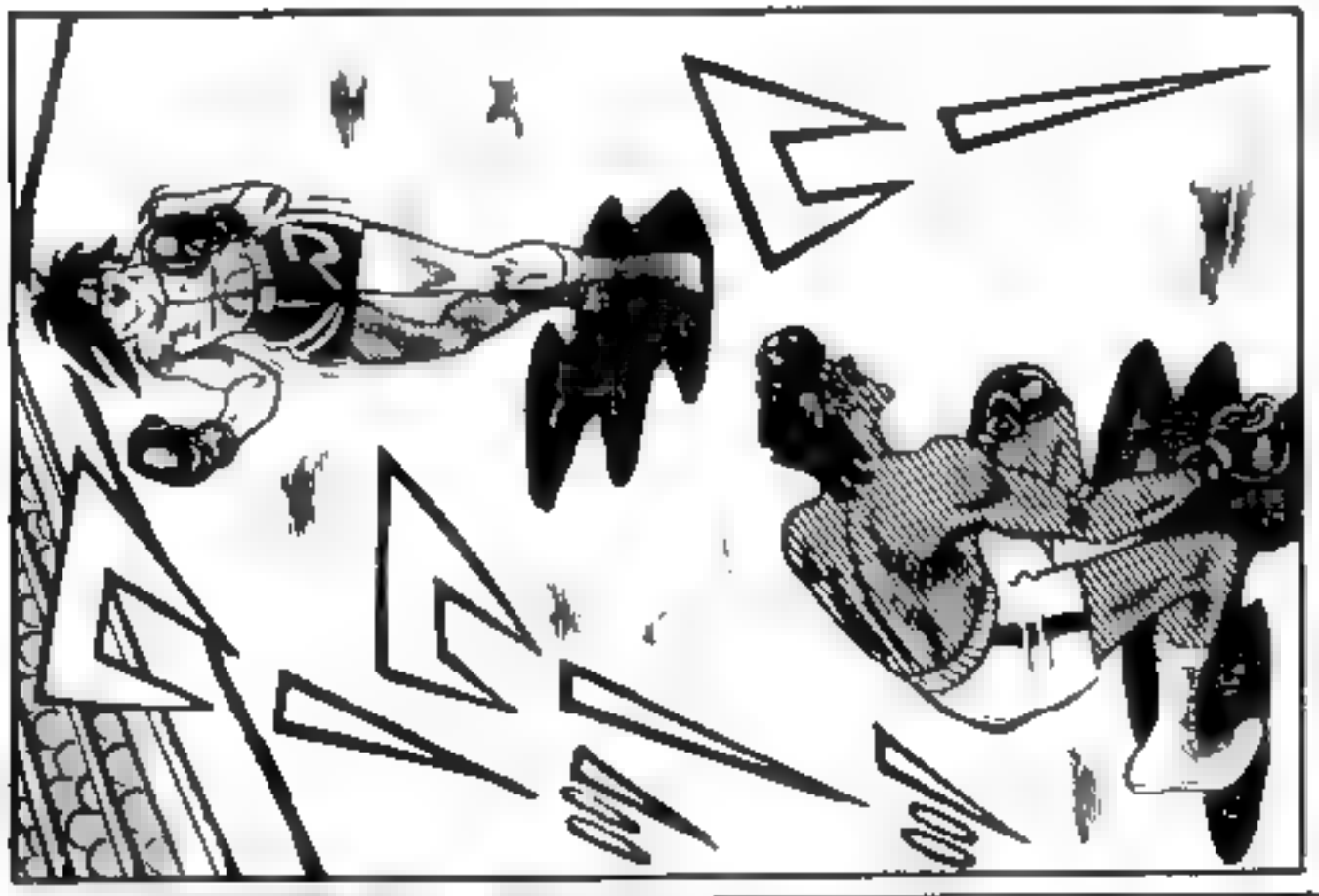
THAT'S RIGHT! ATTACK!
DISH HIM SOME PUNISHMENT TOO!
COME ON JOE! DON'T JUST KEEP TAKING IT!
RAGHHHH!

UGHH...

AHHH-


HA, THAT'S OUR BROTHER FOR YA!
WOOHOO!
KEEP IT UP!

HEH HEH.
HEH



ITHO

ドン

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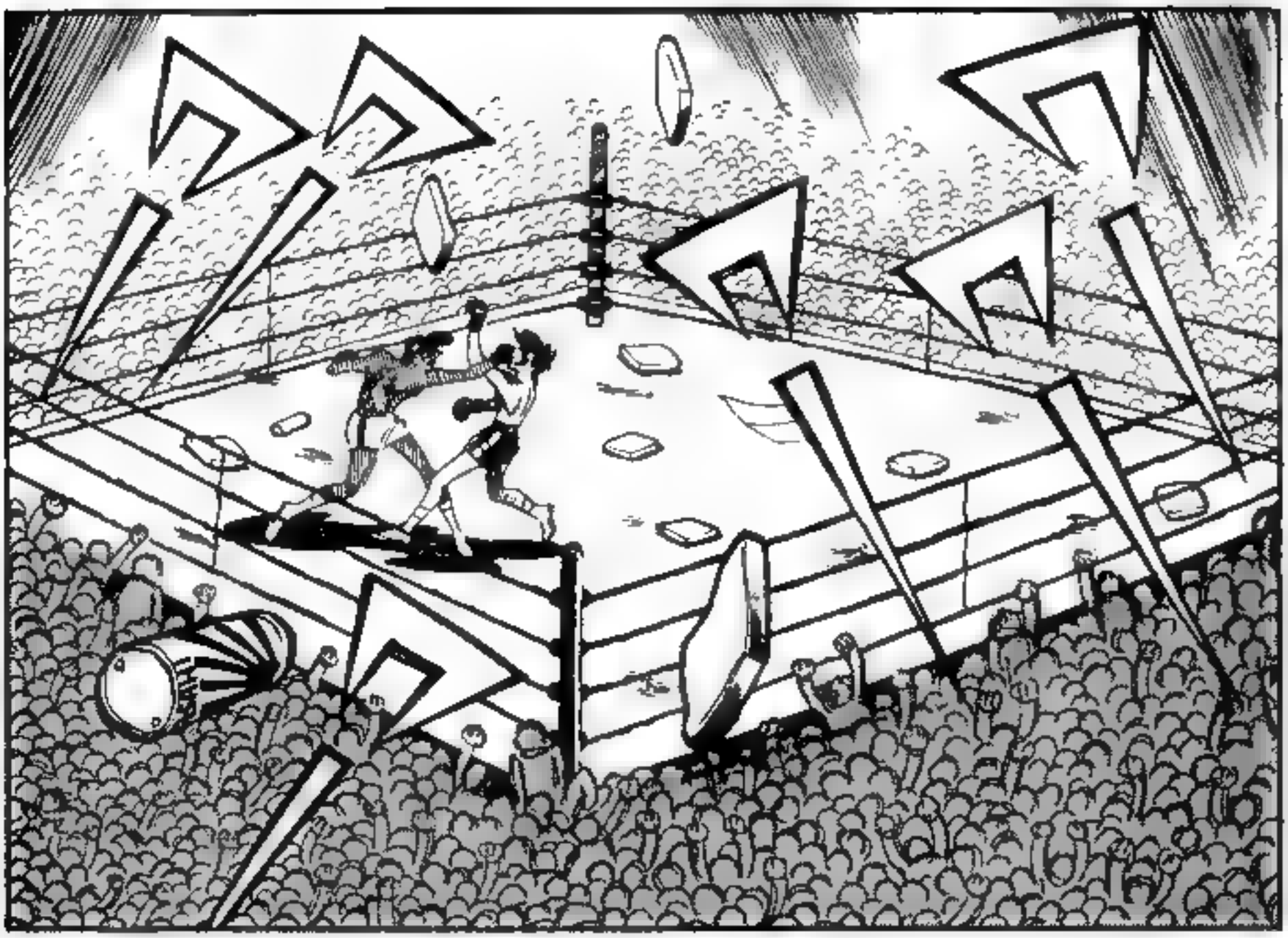
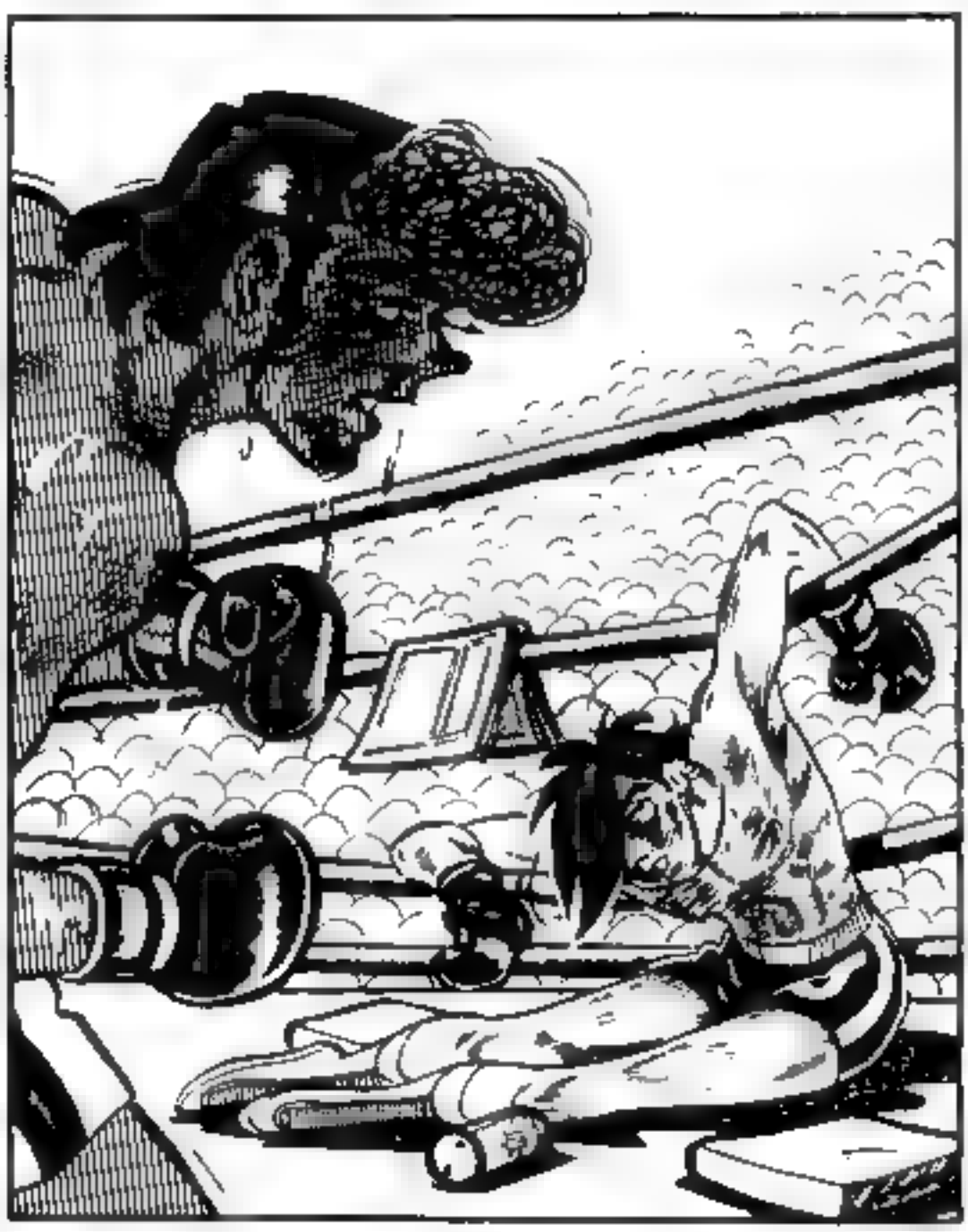
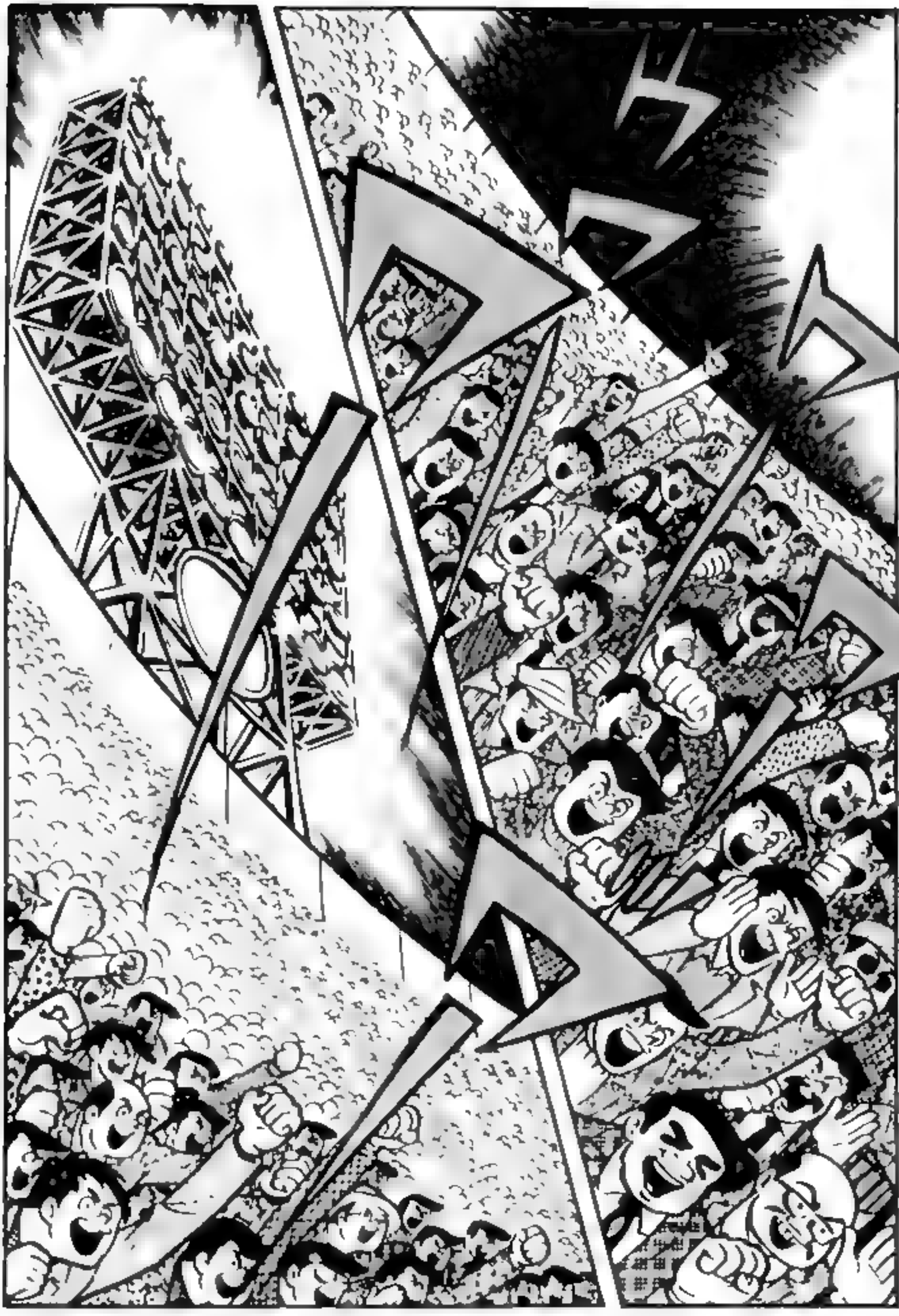
HAHA...







THE FURIOUS WAVE OF APPLAUSE AND CHEERS SWEPT OVER KOURAKUEN STADIUM,

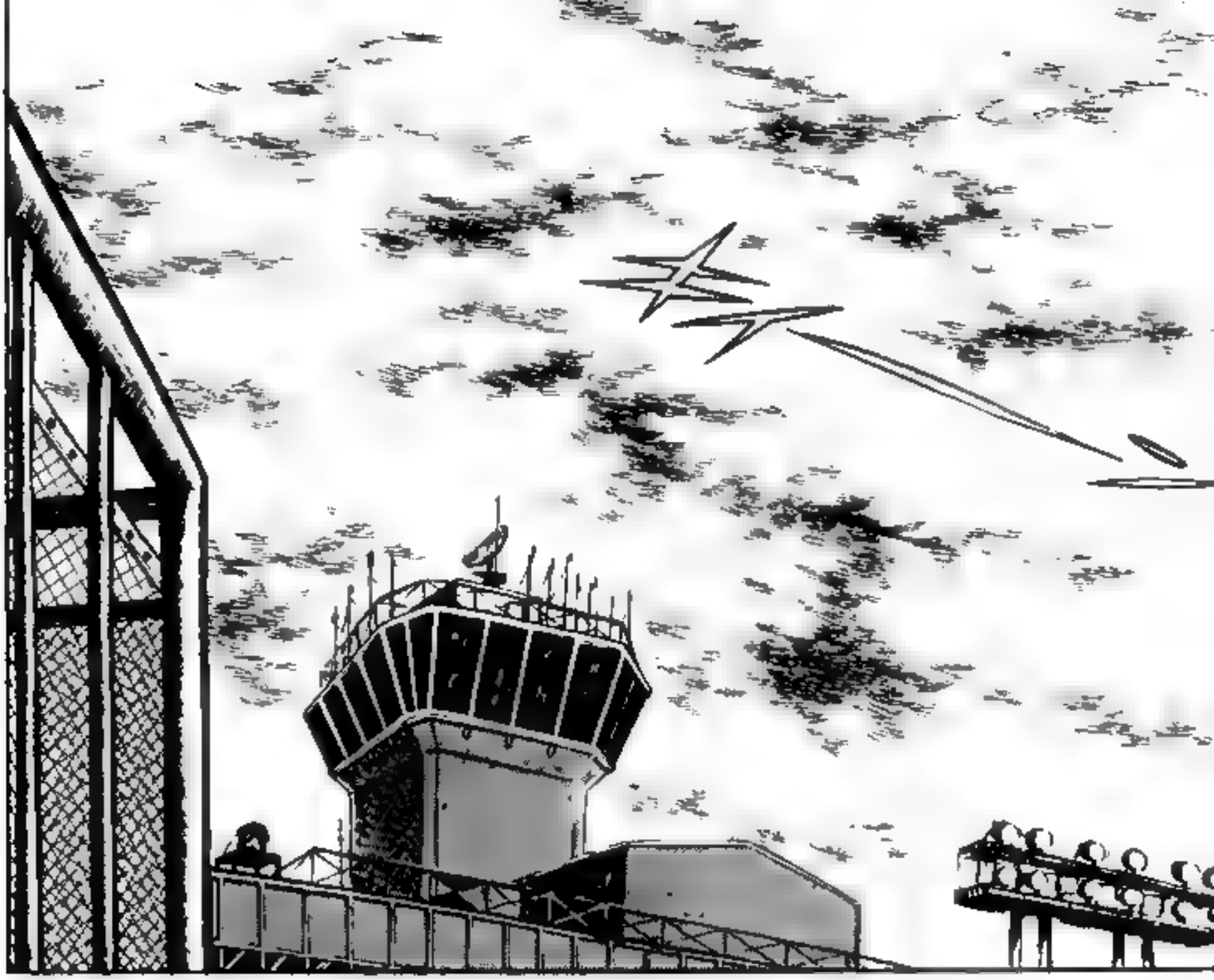
AND SPURRED ON THE TWO BOXERS TO FIGHT ON WITHOUT END.

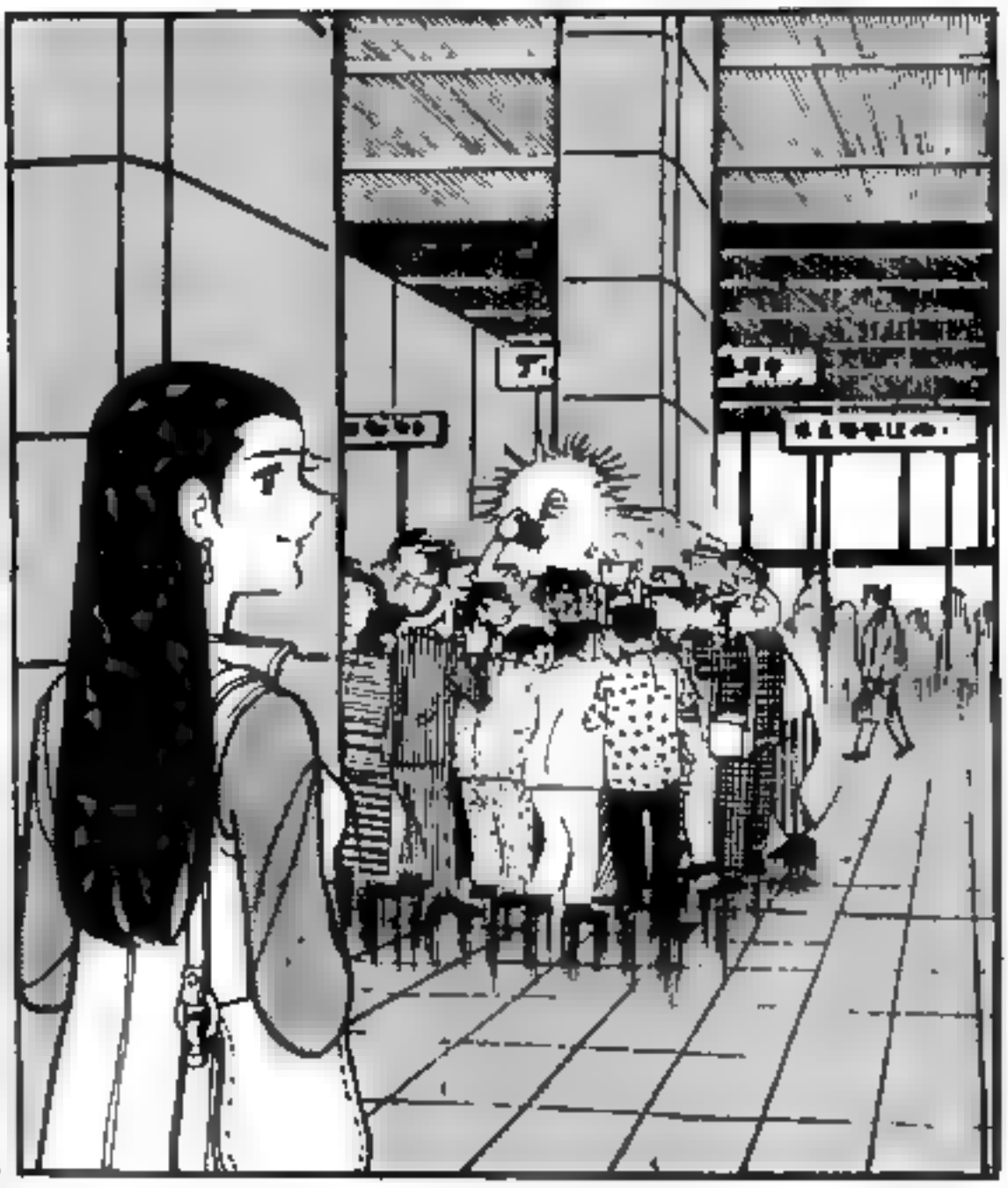
IGNORING THE REF, THE BELL, THE RULES, AND EVERYTHING ELSE, THE TWO WILD BEASTS LEAPT AT EACH OTHER IN RECKLESS ABANDON...

WHEN SOME MINUTES HAD PASSED, THE TWO SILENTLY SLUMPED TO THE BLOOD AND SWEAT-STAINED RING FLOOR.

AS THEIR SECONDS STOOD BY DUMBFOUNDED,

THE 37,000 PEOPLE IN THE STANDS FELT UTTERLY SATISFIED FOR WITNESSING THE VERY RAW FOUNDATION OF THE SPORT CALLED BOXING.





IT'S TIME TO PART WAYS.

WELL... IT'S TIME.

TO ALL THE FRIENDS I MADE HERE IN JAPAN, MAY YOU REMAIN IN GOOD HEALTH!

GOOD-BYE!

OH WHAT, THEY'RE GONNA GO JUST LIKE THAT...?

THANK YOU.

I BOTH BELIEVE AND WISH FOR YOUR SUCCESS IN YOUR UPCOMING WORLD TITLE MATCH.

TAKE CARE, CARLOS. YOU TOO ROBERT.

GOOD BYE, MS. YOUKO.

YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'S REALLY CARLOS RIVERA!

WHERE, WHERE?

HEY, LOOK. CARLOS RIVERA IS GOING HOME.

ZZZ

COME TO JAPAN AGAIN ONCE YOU BECOME THE WORLD CHAMPION!

WE'LL ALL BE WAITING TO HEAR YOU TAKE THAT WORLD TITLE!

GOOD BYE, CARLOS THE UNCROWNED EMPEROR!

THANK YOU EVERYONE!

IS YABUKI JOE NOT COMING...?

WHERE'S JOE...?

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR SOMEONE?

WHAT'S WRONG, CARLOS?

PAN A

I MIGHT BE ABLE TO SEE YABUKI HERE AT THE AIRPORT...

I WAS ACTUALLY HOPING,

HE'S SURE TO BE MORE INJURED THAN YOU RIGHT NOW

YOU'RE STILL A WORLD RANKER. PUNCH FOR PUNCH, YOU HAVE THE EDGE.

EVEN IF IT WAS A CLOSE FIGHT WITH BOTH OF YOU SUFFERING DOWNS,

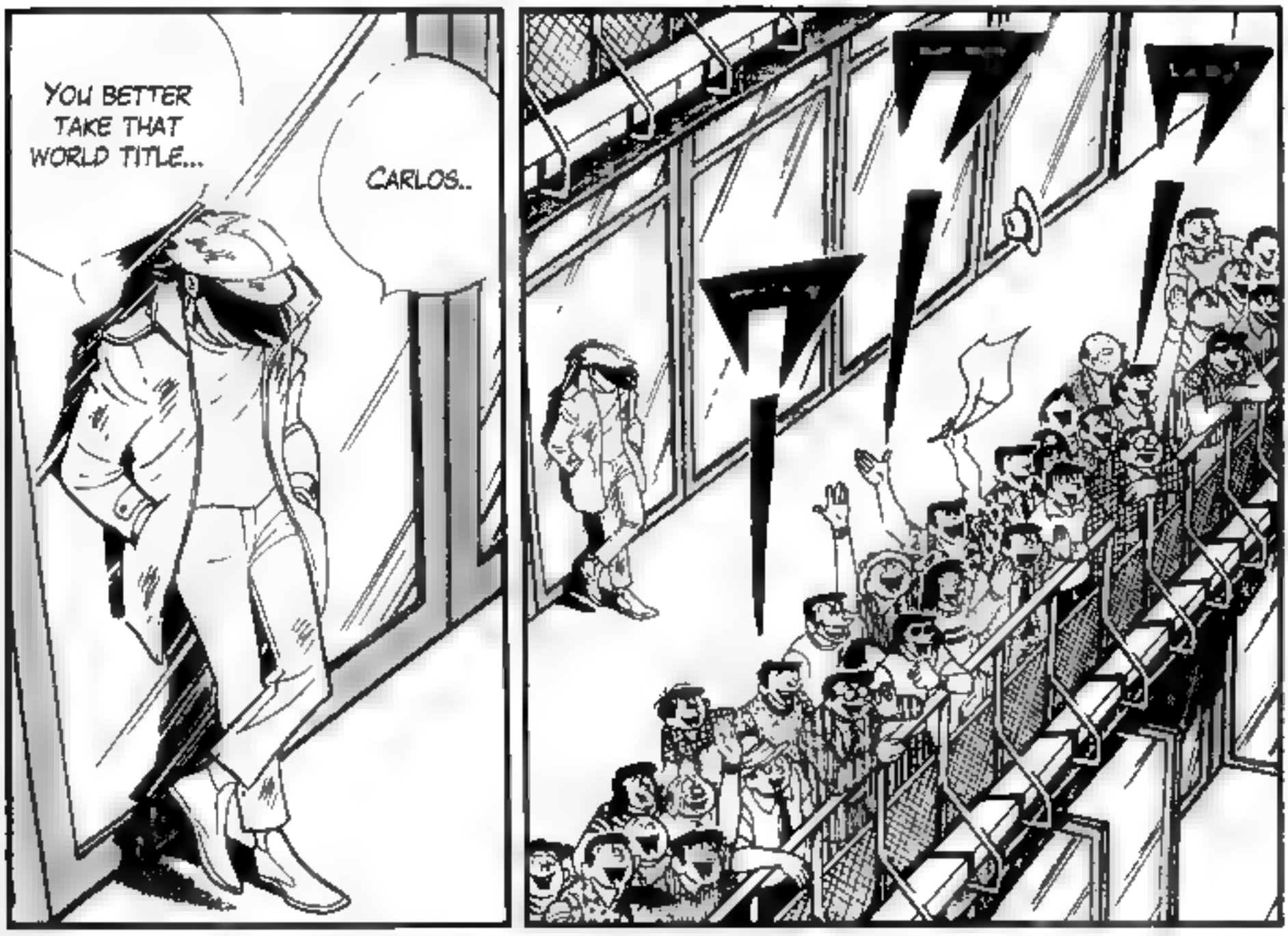
I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL BUT HE'S PROBABLY IN THE HOSPITAL RIGHT NOW.

I UNDERSTAND, ROBERT.

THE TWO OF US DON'T HAVE THE FREE TIME TO GET HUNG UP ON PAST SENTIMENTS.

LET'S GO.

WE HAVE TO GIVE ALL OUR FOCUS TO THE WORLD TITLE MATCH COMING IN JUST ONE MONTH!


YOU BETTER TAKE THAT WORLD TITLE...
CARLOS..

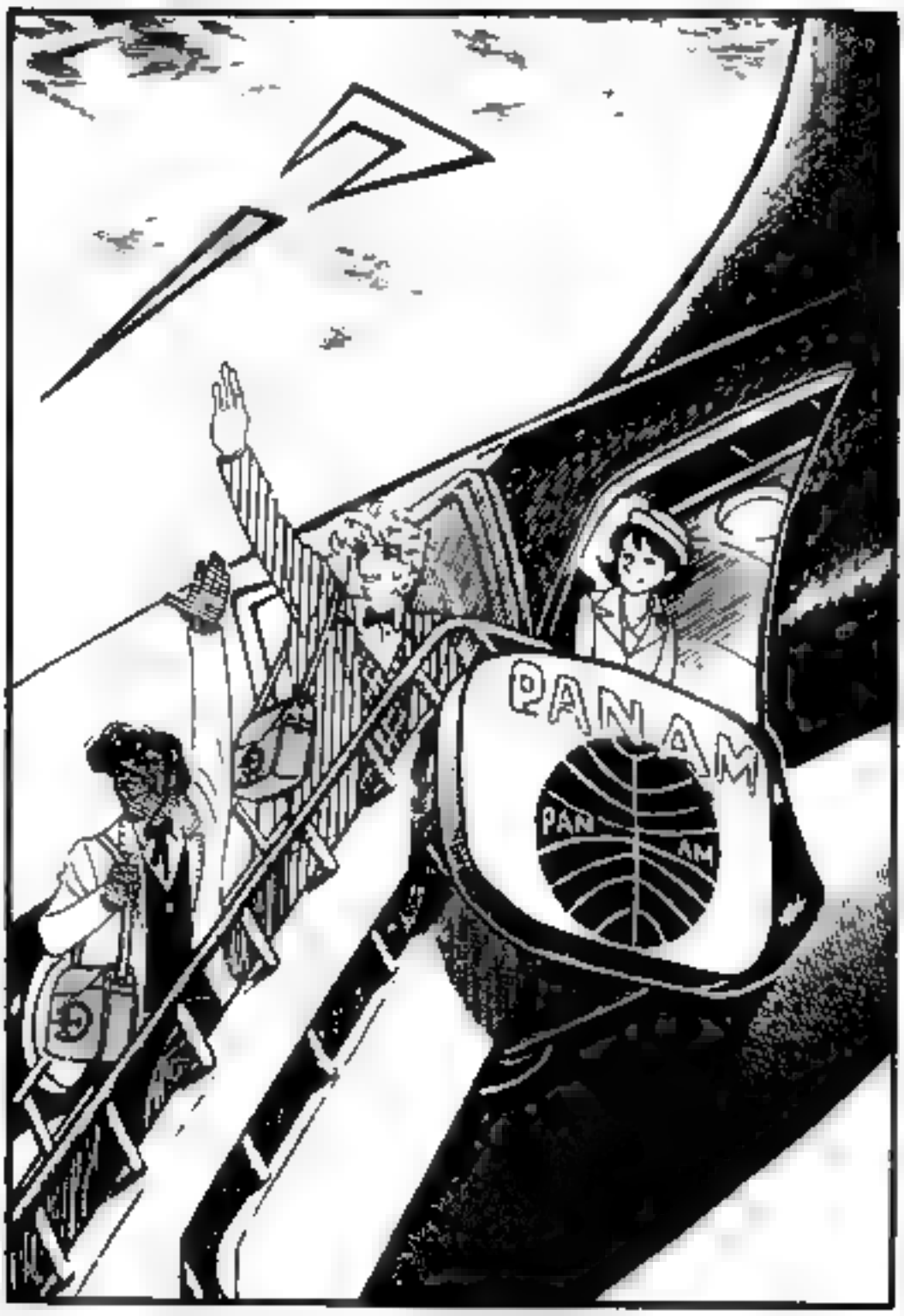
ALL WE REALLY DID WAS BEAT THE HELL OUTTA EACH OTHER...
IT'S A SHAME WE NEVER HAD THE CHANCE TO TALK PROPERLY.
EVEN THOUGH YOU STAYED QUITE A WHILE IN JAPAN,

IS TO BECOME CLOSER THAN FRIENDS WHO'VE SHARED A MILLION WORDS TOGETHER. OUR FIGHT CARVED AN UNFORGETTABLE MESSAGE IN EACH OF OUR SOULS...

TO FIGHT LIKE THAT ON THE RING WITH GLOVES STAINED WITH BLOOD AND SWEAT,

BUT... I SUPPOSE IT WAS THE SAME AS WITH RIKIISHI.

TAKE CARE, CARLOS.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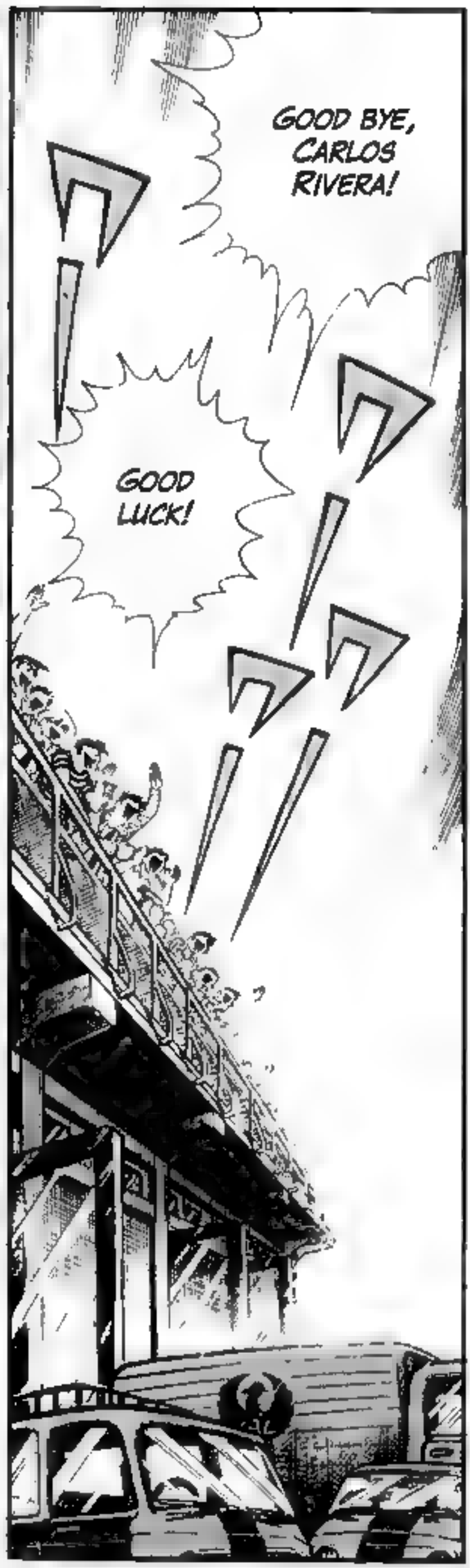
PAN AM


GOOD BYE, CARLOS RIVERA!
GOOD LUCK!

PERHAPS MY BODY REALLY DOESN'T WANT TO LEAVE THIS COUNTRY

HAHA... TO THINK I'D TRIP UP ON THESE STAIRS...

OH- PLEASE DO WATCH YOUR STEPS, SIR.

W-WHAT'S WRONG, CARLOS!?

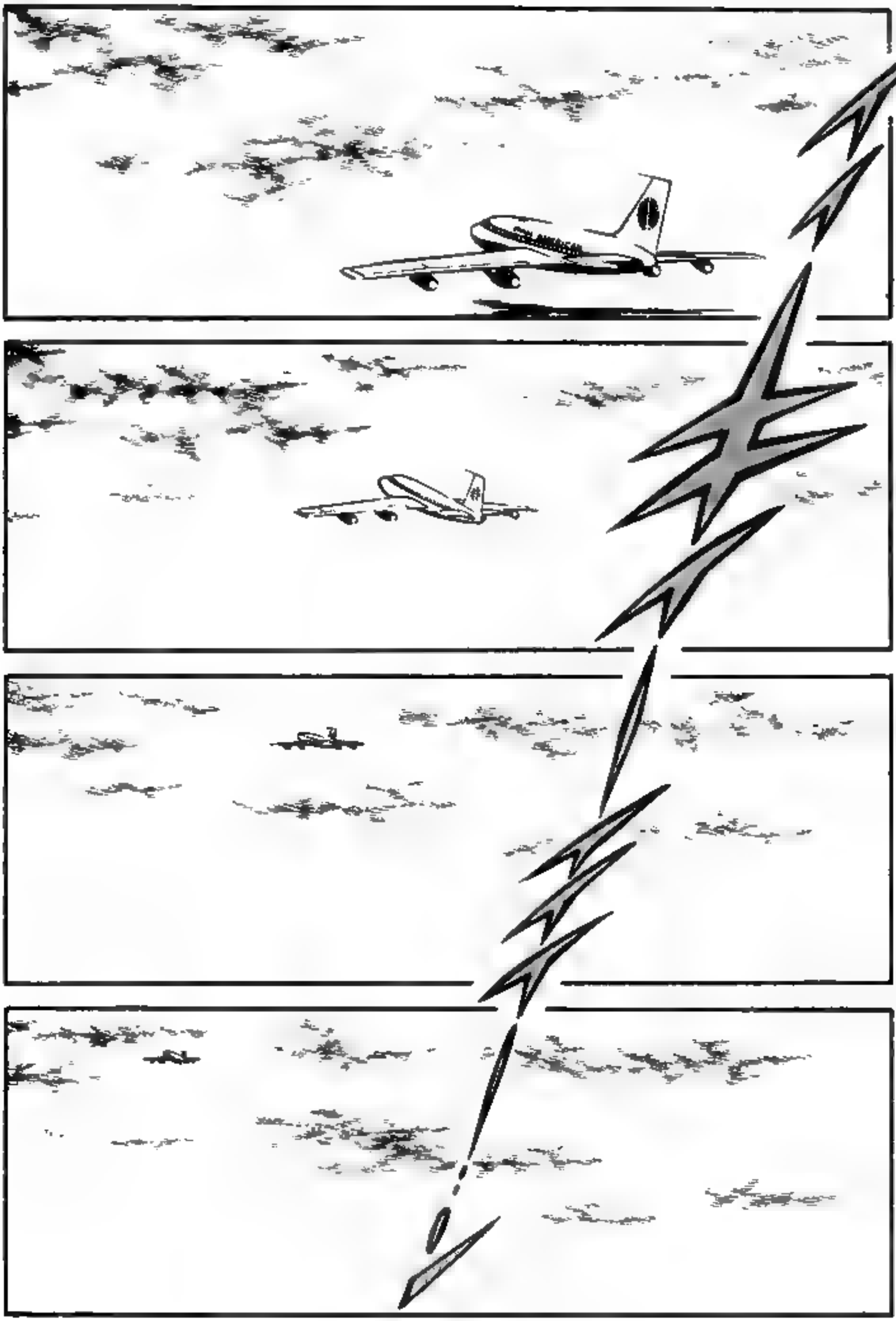
TAKE CARE!

GOOD BYE, EVERYONE!

NO...

N...

AGHH-



AT THE SHIRAKI BOXING GYM...

ONE MONTH LATER,

SHIRAKI BOXING

MISS YOUKO!

ガチャ

THAT'S PRESIDENT SHIRAKI TO YOU!

EXCUSE ME FOR THAT SLIPUP, PRESIDENT SHIRAKI...

O-OH RIGHT...

HAHA, IT'S FINE.

YES, I'M WONDERING WHETHER I SHOULD ENTRUST THE MANAGEMENT OF THIS GYM TO AN EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONAL,

OR JUST GIVE THIS ALL UP FOR GOOD AND CLOSE DOWN THE PLACE...

I SUPPOSE IT IS UNNATURAL FOR A WOMAN TO BE THE PRESIDENT OF A BOXING GYM.

THAT'S WHY I'M RECONSIDERING MY POSITION EVEN NOW...

Y-YOU ARE...?

WHAT!?

B-BUT!

IN ANY CASE, WHAT DID YOU COME TO SEE ME FOR?

.....

UHH. THERE'S A VISITOR FOR YOU.

FROM TANGE GYM.

UMM...

ACTUALLY, YABUKI JOE CAME HERE IN PLACE OF HIS MANAGER.

AHH, SO MR. TANGE FINALLY SHOWS UP AT LAST AFTER A WHOLE MONTH...

HELLO. I'M COMING IN.

HEH HEH. DOES IT SEEM SO?

Y-YOU LOOK WELL.
YABUKI.

SO THE LEAST I COULD DO IS APPEAR THAT WAY.
WELL... I DID COME HERE IN PLACE OF PRESIDENT TANGE TODAY,

...
SO YOU'RE NOT ACTUALLY WELL ON THE INSIDE?
OH...?

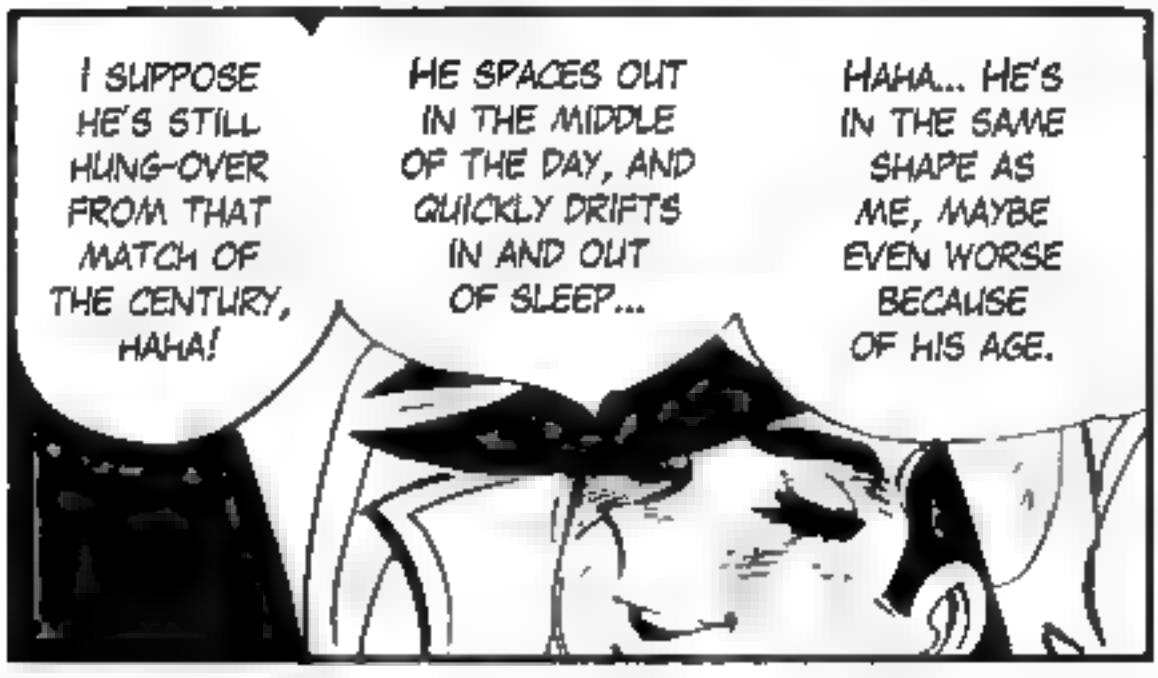
YES.
PLEASE BRING SOMETHING TO DRINK FOR OUR GUEST

THIS SOFA IS OPEN FOR GUESTS, RIGHT?
AH, MY APOLOGIES. PLEASE, TAKE A SEAT.

I'LL BE LEAVING AS SOON AS MY BUSINESS IS DONE.
I DON'T NEED ANY.

TO BE HONEST, MY BODY'S STILL IN QUITE A MESS AFTER TAKING ON A MONSTER LIKE CARLOS.
SO AS I WAS SAYING...
MY BODY FEELS LIKE A DEAD HUSK, EVEN.

I'D APPRECIATE IT IF YOU COULD QUICKLY CONCLUDE OUR BUSINESS SO I CAN BE OFF ON MY WAY.
NOW THEN,


I SUPPOSE HE'S STILL HUNG-OVER FROM THAT MATCH OF THE CENTURY, HAHA!
HE SPACES OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY, AND QUICKLY DRIFTS IN AND OUT OF SLEEP...
HAHA... HE'S IN THE SAME SHAPE AS ME, MAYBE EVEN WORSE BECAUSE OF HIS AGE.

HOW IS MR. DANPEI BY THE WAY?

Y-YES, MA'AM.

WAIT IN THE ROOM NEXT DOOR FOR ANY FAX MESSAGES FOR ME IN THE MEANWHILE.

OH, YOU CAN LEAVE US ALONE NOW.

I SEE. THAT EXPLAINS WHY HE STILL HASN'T COME TO PICK UP THE REMAINING HALF OF THE FIGHT MONEY.

EXPECTING A CALL? OH THAT'S RIGHT. CARLOS SHOULD BE FIGHTING IN HIS WORLD TITLE MATCH, RIGHT AROUND NOW.

THE REMAINDER AS PROMISED.

HERE.

THAT IS HOW MUCH I WISH TO COMPENSATE YOU... PLEASE ACCEPT IT AS A TOKEN OF MY FEELINGS.

A BUSINESS-WOMAN LIKE YOU SHOULDN'T MAKE SUCH A SILLY MISTAKE.

THAT'S STRANGE.. I DON'T THINK THE REMAINING HALF OF MY FIGHT MONEY IS SUPPOSED TO BE THIS MUCH.

IT'S NOT A MISTAKE.

AND WHAT SORT OF FEELINGS WOULD THOSE BE NOW...?

YOUR FEELINGS?

THE FIGHT MERELY ENDED AS SOMETHING THAT SECURED CARLOS A CHANCE AT THE WORLD TITLE...

OHH, I GET IT NOW... DESPITE ALL THAT HYPE ABOUT THE "MATCH OF THE CENTURY,"

SUCH A TRAGIC STORY, ISN'T IT? AND SO YOU MAKE A DONATION SEVERAL TIMES THE PROMISED AMOUNT TO HIM...

AND FOR THAT ALONE, THE YABUKI JOE BEFORE YOU NOW HAD TO LET HIS BODY BE REDUCED TO A LIFELESS HUSK.

IT'S NOT A DONATION, I'M GIVING YOU THE MONEY AS-

YOU KNOW WHY THE TWO OF US CAN'T EVER TALK STRAIGHT WHENEVER WE MEET!?

OH CUT THE BULLSHIT!

YOU GOT THAT!?

IT'S BECAUSE A WOMAN LIKE YOU IS IN WAY OVER HER HEAD IN THINKING THAT SHE CAN CROSS INTO A MAN'S WORLD!

IRRESPECTIVE OF HOW MUCH YOU THINK THEY'RE WORTH AND TRY TO COMPENSATE ME WITH!

EVEN IF MY BODY WERE REDUCED TO A USELESS HUSK AND I HAD TO RETIRE, MY FIGHTS WITH RIKIISHI AND CARLOS WILL REMAIN AS A TESTAMENT TO MY YOUTH,

YOU THINK LIFE-RISKING FIGHTS ARE SOMETHING THAT'S DONE JUST FOR MONEY!?

MA'AM, IS SOMETHING-

!?

YOU GOT THAT!? WRITE UP ANOTHER DAMN CHEQUE ALREADY!

SO JUST WRITE DOWN THE PROMISED AMOUNT!

JUST LET ME KNOW IF YOU GET THAT FAX.

WE'RE JUST ABOUT DONE HERE.

N-NO, IT'S NOTHING.

WELL THAT WAS QUICK. THE MATCH SHOULD ONLY HAVE JUST STARTED...

A-ACTUALLY... THE CALL YOU WERE WAITING FOR JUST CAME IN...

IT... IT ENDED JUST A MINUTE AND 33 SECONDS INTO THE FIRST ROUND. CARLOS RIVERA...

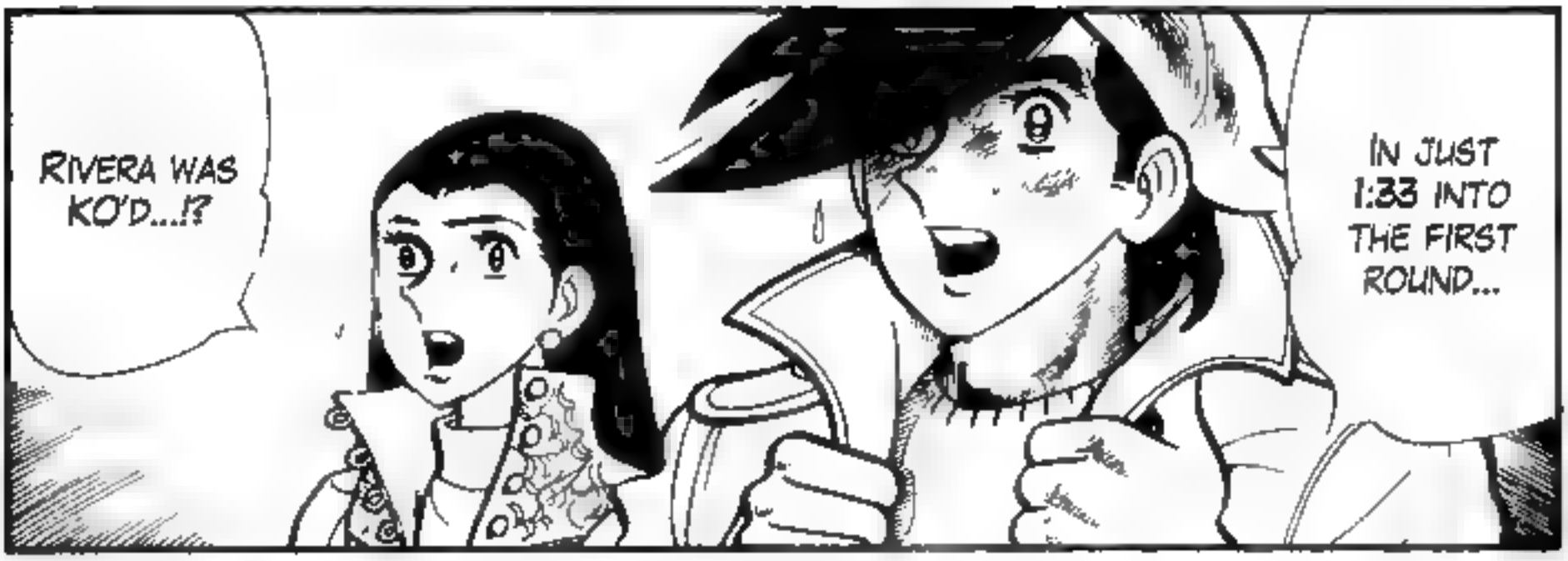
DID RIVERA SECURE A KO-WIN?

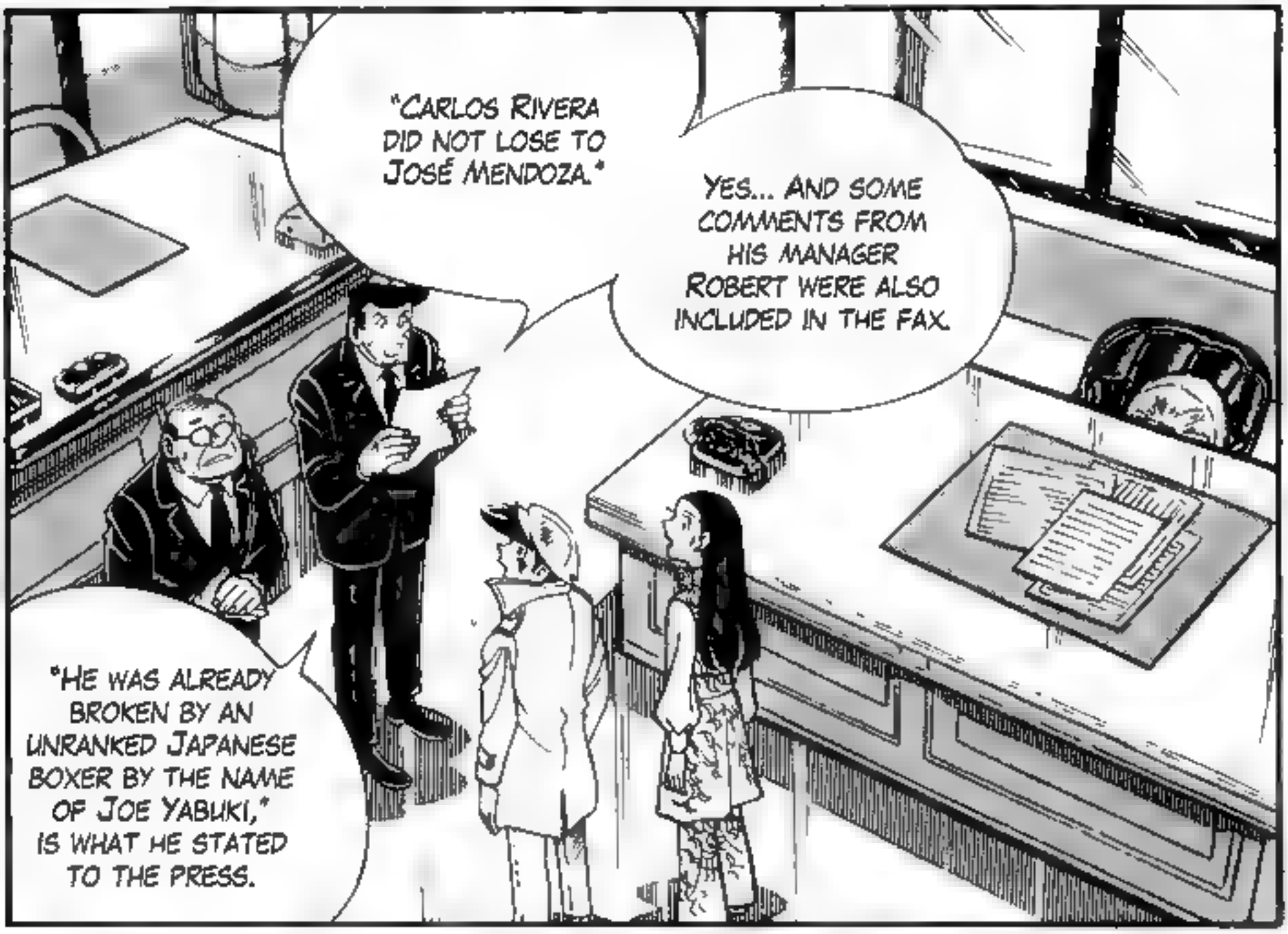
WAS KO'D!?

CARLOS RIVERA,

IT WAS RIVERA WHO WAS KO'D IN THE FIRST ROUND BY THE CHAMPION JOSÉ MENDOZA.

NO, MA'AM...


RIVERA WAS KO'D...!?
IN JUST 1:33 INTO THE FIRST ROUND...


"CARLOS RIVERA DID NOT LOSE TO JOSÉ MENDOZA."
YES... AND SOME COMMENTS FROM HIS MANAGER ROBERT WERE ALSO INCLUDED IN THE FAX.
"HE WAS ALREADY BROKEN BY AN UNRANKED JAPANESE BOXER BY THE NAME OF JOE YABUKI," IS WHAT HE STATED TO THE PRESS.

HE SHOWED SYMPTOMS OF PUNCH-DRUNK SYNDROME, SEVERELY AFFECTING HIS REFLEXES AND FIGHTING SKILLS. HE WAS IN A STATE WHERE HE EVEN HAD DIFFICULTY WALKING UP A FLIGHT OF STAIRS...

ALTHOUGH RIVERA FOUGHT A SPECTACULAR MATCH IN TOKYO AGAINST YABUKI,

THE AFTERMATH OF THAT FIGHT REVEALED A CRITICAL BLOW TO MY FIGHTER'S HEALTH.

NO... CARLOS IS DONE FOR.

MANAGER ROBERT! DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS FOR CARLOS TO CHALLENGE THE CHAMPION AGAIN ANY TIME IN THE FUTURE?

JOSÉ MENDOZA HAS STATED HE'LL BE READY TO TAKE ON CARLOS WHENEVER. HOW DO YOU RESPOND?

CARLOS RIVERA IS IRREVERSIBLY CRIPPLED...!

JOE YABUKI TURNED HIM INTO A HUNK OF SCRAP...

NEXT

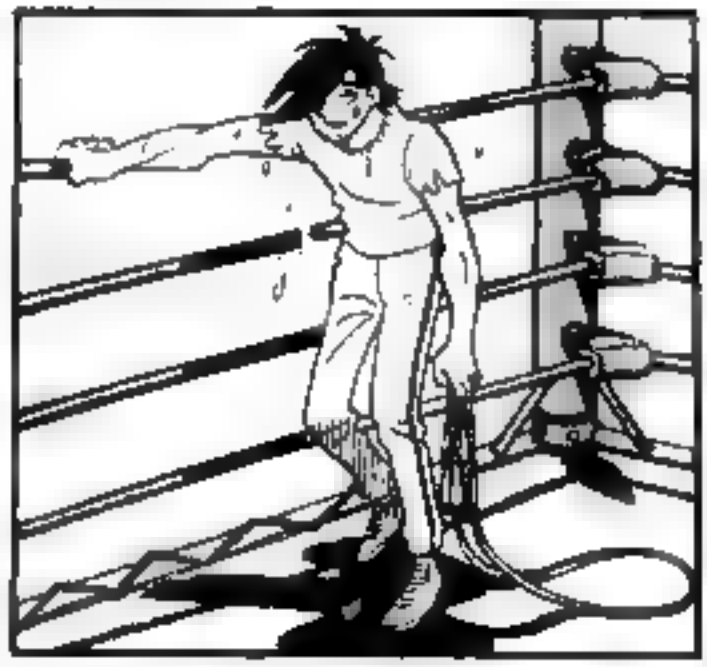
BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP

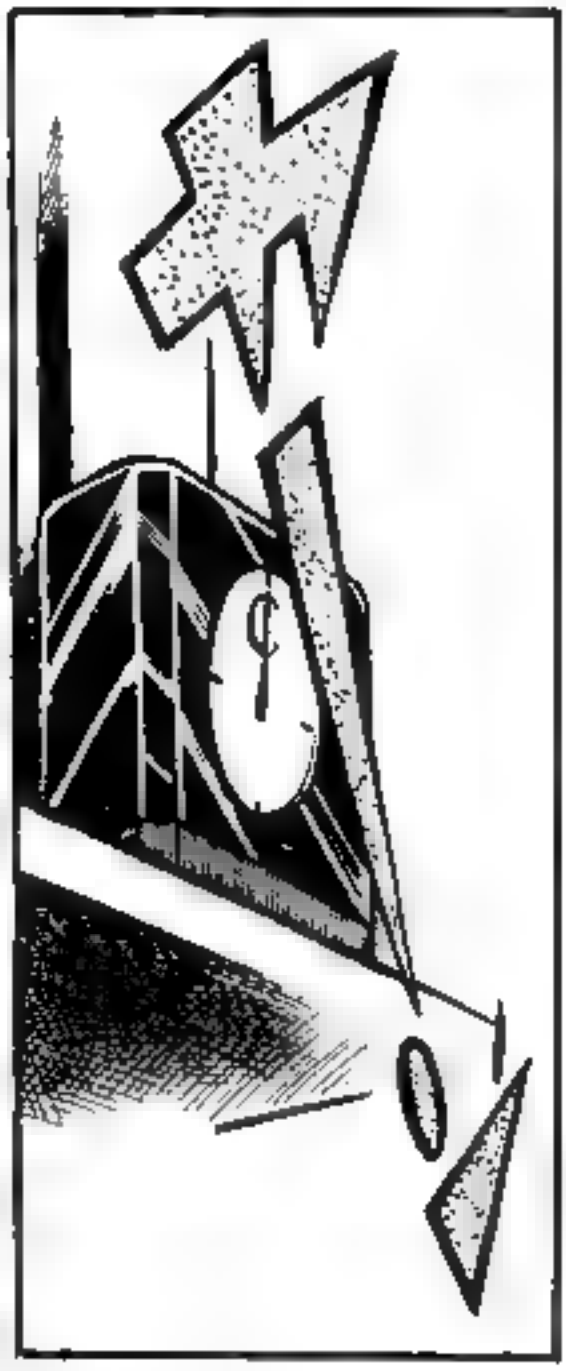
HE'D ALREADY BEEN CRIPPLED...
WORD IS THAT BY THE TIME CARLOS RIVERA STEPPED OUT ONTO THE RING TO FACE THE CHAMPION,
SO WHAT D'YA GUYS THINK?

AS OF LATE, I HEAR YABUKI'S BEEN GAINING SOME REP OVERSEAS AS "THE MAN WHO CRIPPLED CARLOS RIVERA."

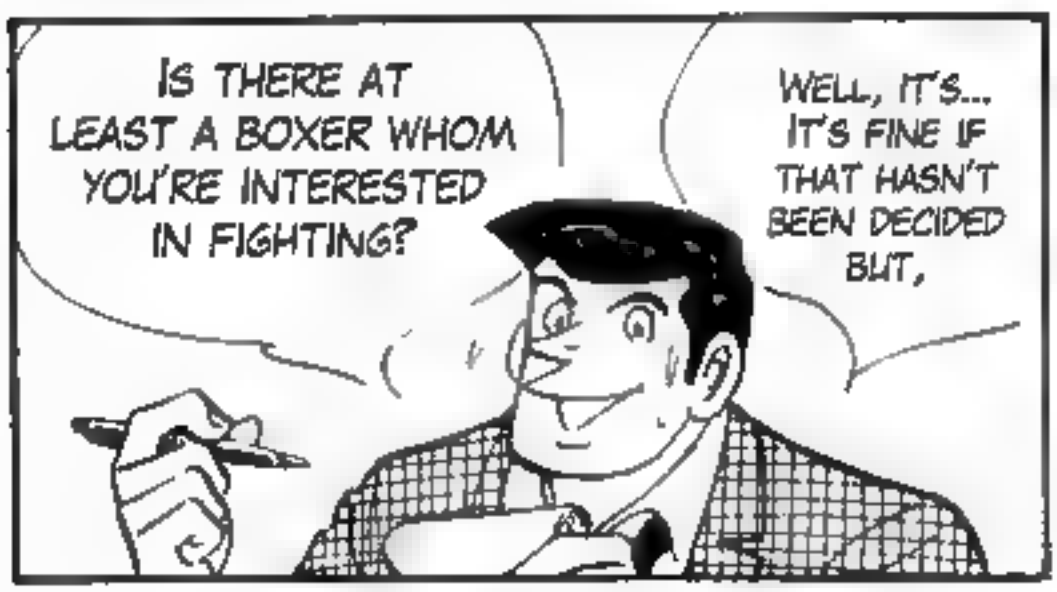
TELL ME ABOUT IT.

IN A WAY, THIS MAKES FOR EVEN A BETTER SCENARIO THAN IF YABUKI WON A FAIR AND HARD-EARNED FIGHT.





SO, YABUKI.
IT'S ALREADY BEEN OVER A MONTH SINCE YOUR FIGHT WITH CARLOS. HAS YOUR NEXT OPPONENT STILL NOT BEEN DECIDED YET?


IS THERE AT LEAST A BOXER WHOM YOU'RE INTERESTED IN FIGHTING?
WELL, IT'S... IT'S FINE IF THAT HASN'T BEEN DECIDED BUT,

YEAH, IT COULD BE THE PACIFIC CHAMPION OR EVEN THE WORLD CHAMP HIMSELF.
YOU CAN NAME ANYBODY, EVEN A NON-BANTAMWEIGHT BOXER.
YEAH, IS THERE?

THE OLD MAN'S WORKING HIS ASS OFF FROM DAWN TO DUSK OVER THAT MATTER THESE DAYS.

THAT MEANS IT SHOULDN'T BE TOO LONG BEFORE WE SEE YABUKI IN THE RING AGAIN.
OH...

SAME GOES FOR PHOTOS TOO. YOU ALWAYS COME OUT GREAT NO MATTER WHICH ANGLE I SHOOT THE CAM.

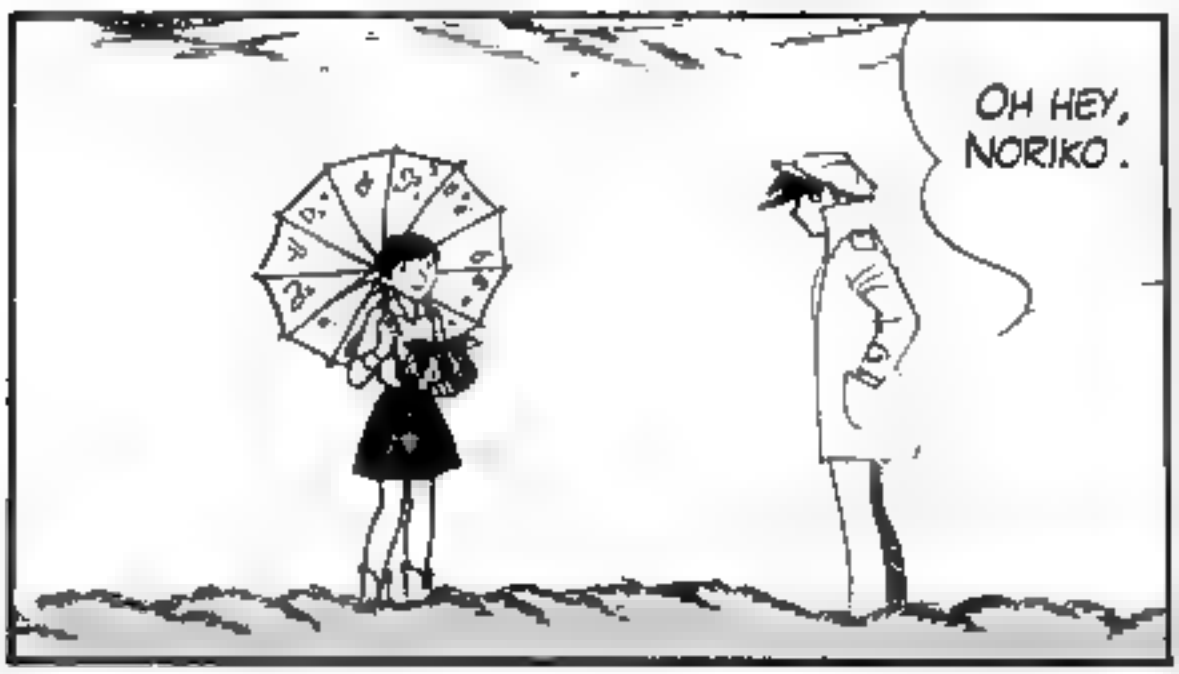
MAN, AM I EVER GLAD I BECAME A BOXING REPORTER! TALKIN' TO YOU ONE-ON-ONE'S A DREAM!
THANKS. THANKS A LOT! THAT COMMENT ALONE SHOULD MAKE FOR A GOOD ARTICLE!
YEAH, AND IT'S REAL EASY TO CHURN OUT AN ARTICLE ON YOU.

WHERE YA GOING, YABUKI?

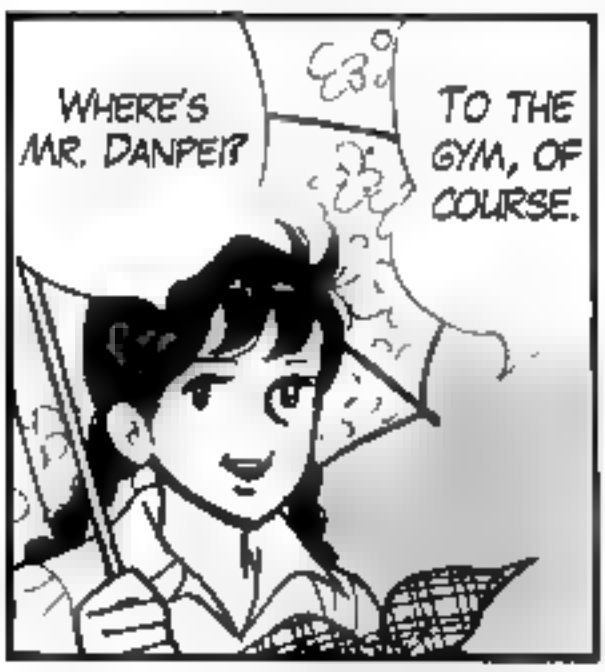
UHH...

JUST WAIT HERE A LITTLE WHILE. YOU PROMISED YOU'D POSE FOR MY CAMERA AFTER YOU FINISHED WORKING OUT, DIDN'T YOU..?

WELL IT'S ONLY NATURAL. HE DID DISMANTLE A WORLD RANKER, AFTER ALL.
I GOTTA SAY THOUGH... HE'S GOTTEN A BIT STUCK UP THESE DAYS.
HE'S GETTING A BIT ON MY NERVES THOUGH.


OH HEY, NORIKO.

WHERE ARE YOU HEADED, YABUKI?


WHERE'S MR. DANPEI?
TO THE GYM, OF COURSE.

I SHOULD ASK YOU WHERE YOU'RE GOING.

IT STOPPED RAINING QUITE A WHILE AGO.

HE SHOULD BE COMING BACK IN JUST A BIT...
BUT WHERE'RE YOU GOING IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS RAIN?

WANNA COME WITH?
I'M GOING TO THE PARK.

I'VE BEEN WALKING AROUND UNDER THIS UMBRELLA LIKE SUCH A FOOL.
OH HOW EMBARRASSING. WHEN DID IT STOP?

I'M HAPPY.

HUH?

I ONLY... C-CUT IT OUT

MEANT IT AS A SORT OF GREETING, DON'T GET ME WRONG.

I MEAN, YOU'VE NEVER INVITED ME TO COME ALONG WITH YOU ANYWHERE BEFORE.

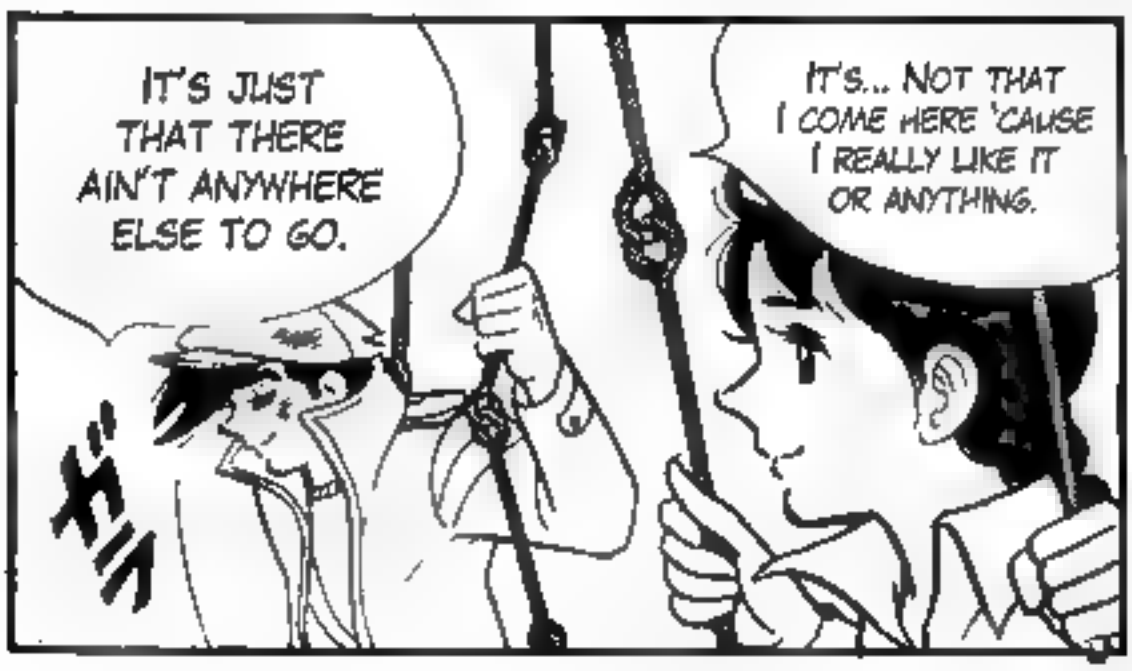
I SAID I'M HAPPY.

IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT I'M STILL HAPPY!

IT'S FINE IF YOU ONLY MEANT IT AS A SORT OF GREETING.

JUST SWINGING GENTLY ON THIS SWING...
I OFTEN SAW YOU HANGING OUT HERE ON MY WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL.

YOU LIKE PARKS, DON'T YOU?


IT'S JUST THAT THERE AIN'T ANYWHERE ELSE TO GO.
ギィ
IT'S... NOT THAT I COME HERE 'CAUSE I REALLY LIKE IT OR ANYTHING.

AND IT'S A PAIN HAVING PEOPLE STARE AT ME NO MATTER WHERE I GO.

REEKING OF ALCOHOL,

EVERYWHERE ELSE IS EITHER PACKED WITH PEOPLE,

OR FULL OF LOUD ANNOYING DISTRACTIONS AND CIGARETTE SMOKE...

I AIN'T TIRED AT ALL!

YOU SEEM REALLY TIRED, YABUKI...

AND I DON'T EVEN RUN ALL THAT SERIOUSLY THESE DAYS...

I SLEEP WELL,

EVEN WHEN I DO MY DAILY TRAINING, I ONLY PUT IN A BIT OF EFFORT.

SORRY ABOUT HAVING YOU TAKE CARE OF ME AND THE OLD MAN ALL THE TIME.

OH, YOU MADE SOME?

OH, I ALMOST FORGOT. WOULD YOU LIKE SOME SANDWICHES?

DELISH.

YOU LIKE TOMATOES IN YOUR SANDWICHES, RIGHT?

WHY DON'T YOU QUIT BOXING ALREADY?

YABUKI ...

...

THIS ONE HAS TOMATOES IN IT.

WHY DO YOU ALWAYS ASK ME STUFF LIKE THAT?

YABUKI?

I ASKED IF YOU WANTED TO QUIT BOXING NOW...
HM? YOU SAY SOME-THIN?

I... I'M AFRAID.

AND IT'S NOT JUST THAT.

IS THAT HOW I LOOK?

EVERY TIME I LOOK AT YOU THESE DAYS, YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE IN SO MUCH PAIN.

WELL...

I'M AFRAID WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO YOU IF YOU CONTINUE TO FIGHT...

YOU SEEM EXHAUSTED, BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY.

BOXING...

THAT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN BITE OTHERS WHILE ON THE VERGE OF DEATH.

THAT'S WHY I GOTTA BE DESPERATE...

YOU BITE OR GET BITTEN YOURSELF.

IS A DOG-EAT-DOG WORLD.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN...?

AND EVERY MOMENT I STOP THEIR HEARTBEATS,

BUT WITH EVERY DROP OF BLOOD I MAKE MY OPPONENTS SPILL,

I FEEL MYSELF SINK FURTHER AND FURTHER IN DEBT.

BUT THIS MIGHT BE SOMETHING ONLY I FEEL.

JUST AS THIS WORLD CONDEMNS KILLERS TO DEATH SENTENCES,

WELL... THIS MIGHT ALL SOUND STRANGE BUT,

DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO QUIT HALF-WAY ON AN EXCUSE LIKE HE'S TOO TIRED.

THOSE WHO SURVIVE IN THE BOXING WORLD WHILE SPILLING THE BLOOD OF OTHERS,

AND OF COURSE, CARLOS RIVERA WHO RECENTLY BECAME CRIPPLED...

ESPECIALLY WHEN I THINK BACK ON THE LATE-RIKIISHI, OR WOLF KANAGUSHI WHOSE JAW I BROKE SO BADLY TO FORCE HIM INTO RETIREMENT,

THAT'S JUST HOW I FEEL...

IT'S ABSURD TO EQUATE IT TO ACTUAL MURDERS AND FEEL GUILTY OVER IT!

EVEN BOXING IS STILL JUST A SPORT.

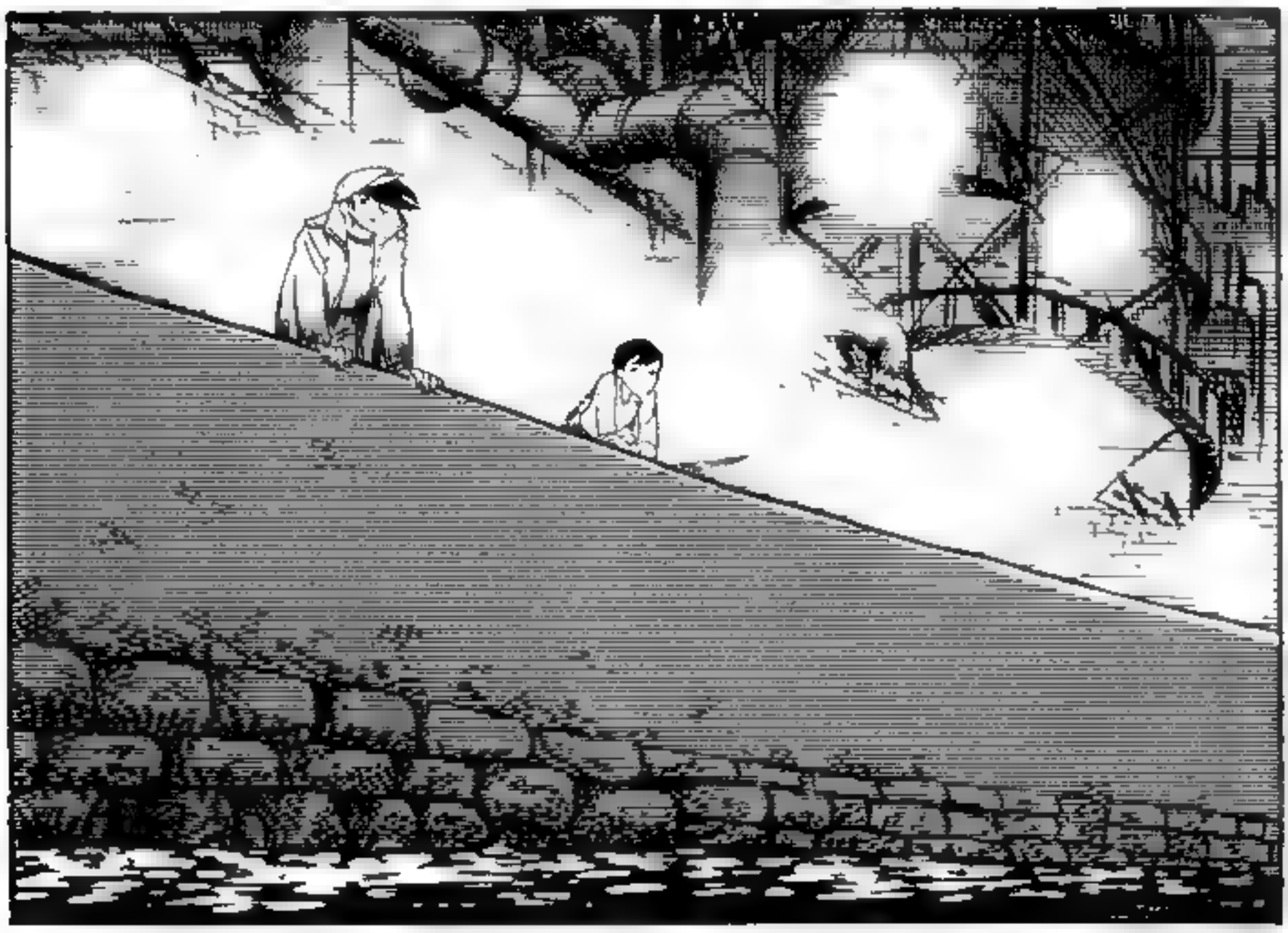
LET'S STOP TALKING ABOUT THIS NOW.

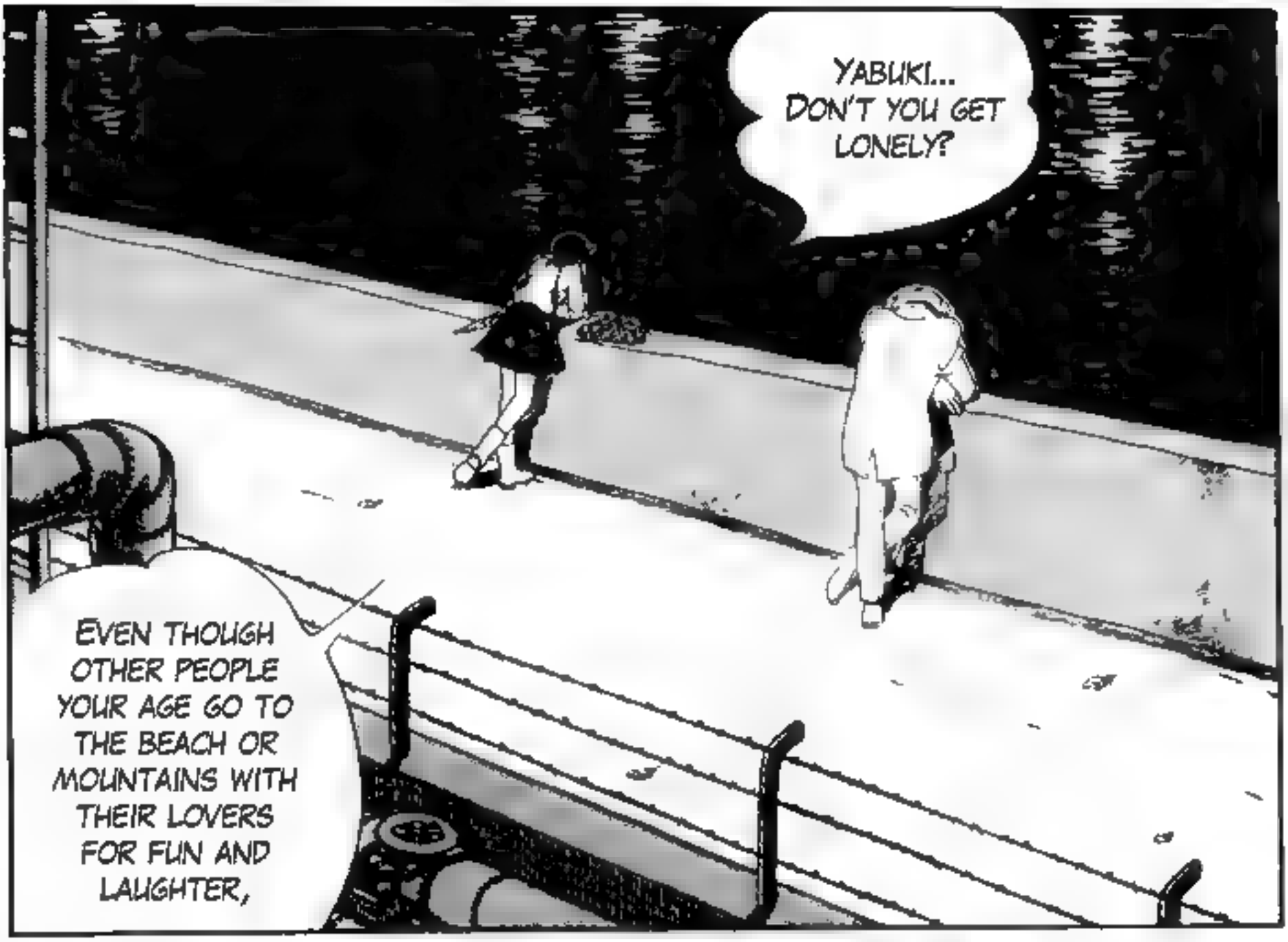
THAT'S WHY I SAID IT MIGHT JUST BE ME WHO FEELS LIKE THIS.

YOU...

YOU'RE BEING TOO HARSH ON YOURSELF, YABUKI

coffee

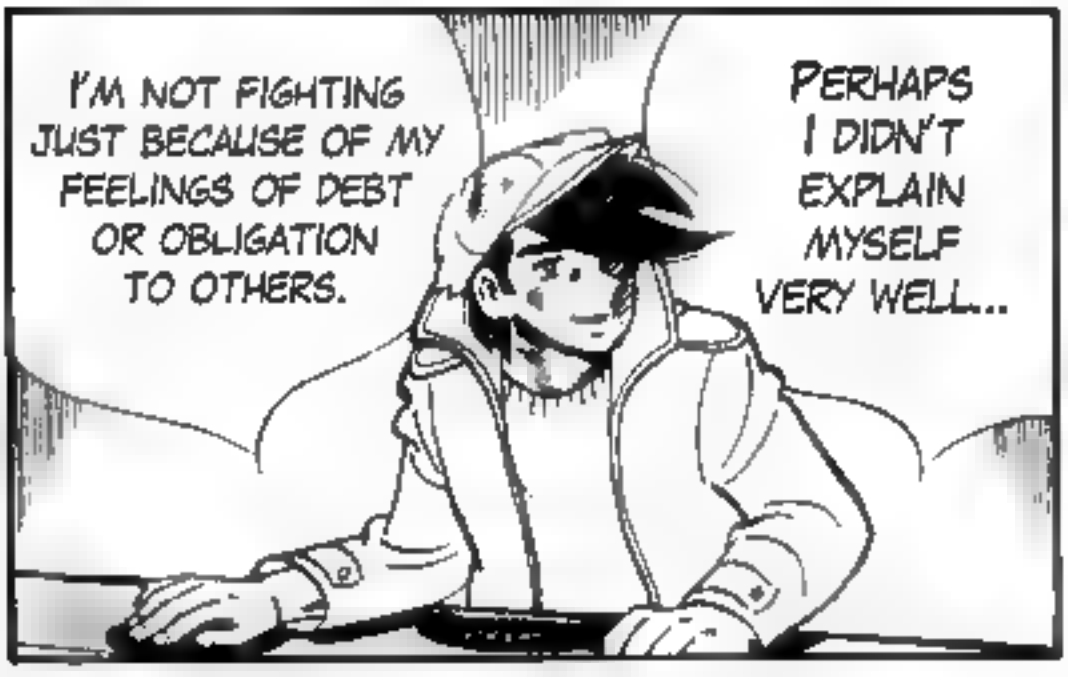



YABUKI... DON'T YOU GET LONELY?
EVEN THOUGH OTHER PEOPLE YOUR AGE GO TO THE BEACH OR MOUNTAINS WITH THEIR LOVERS FOR FUN AND LAUGHTER,

SPENDING ALL YOUR TIME DOING THE JUMP ROPES, STRETCHING, SHADOW-BOXING, OR HITTING THE SAND-BAGS...
DAY IN AND DAY OUT, YOU'RE STUCK IN A GLOOMY GYM THAT SMELLS OF SWEAT, VASELINE, AND TURPENTINE,

YOU PUNCH OTHERS AND GET ALL BRUISED AND BLOODIED UP IN RETURN, LIKE A COCK IN A COCKFIGHT...
AND ON THAT RING, SURROUNDED BY CIGARETTE SMOKE AND JEERS OF THE DRUNKEN CROWD,
THE ONLY TIME YOU GET TO GO ANYWHERE BRIGHT IS THAT CAGE CALLED THE BOXING RING, LIT UP BY SO MANY LIGHTS AS TO BE ALMOST BLINDING...

AND EVEN THOUGH YOUR BODY ACHES TO GROW, YOU CAN'T EVER EAT OR DRINK WHAT YOU WANT BECAUSE YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO WATCH YOUR WEIGHT.


I'M NOT FIGHTING JUST BECAUSE OF MY FEELINGS OF DEBT OR OBLIGATION TO OTHERS.
PERHAPS I DIDN'T EXPLAIN MYSELF VERY WELL...

IT'S MISE-RABLE.
IT'S WRET-CHED,
IT'S FAR TOO DARK FOR A PERSON TO CALL IT HIS YOUTH!

I FIGHT BECAUSE IN THE END, I LOVE BOXING.

IS SOMETHING I'VE ONLY TASTED ON A BLOODIED RING.
BUT THAT BURNING SENSE OF WORTH AND COMPLETENESS...
IT'S CERTAINLY QUITE A WORLD APART FROM THE IDEAL YOUTH YOU TALK ABOUT,

ONLY WHITE ASHES REMAIN...

AND WHEN IT'S OVER,

ONLY WHITE ASHES.

NOT EVEN ANY TINY CINDERS...

IT'S SO BRIGHT IT BURNS YOUR ENTIRE BODY UP IN AN INSTANT.

AND THIS BURNING SENSATION ISN'T A MOMENTARY SPUTTERING THAT OTHER PEOPLE MY AGE MIGHT FEEL.

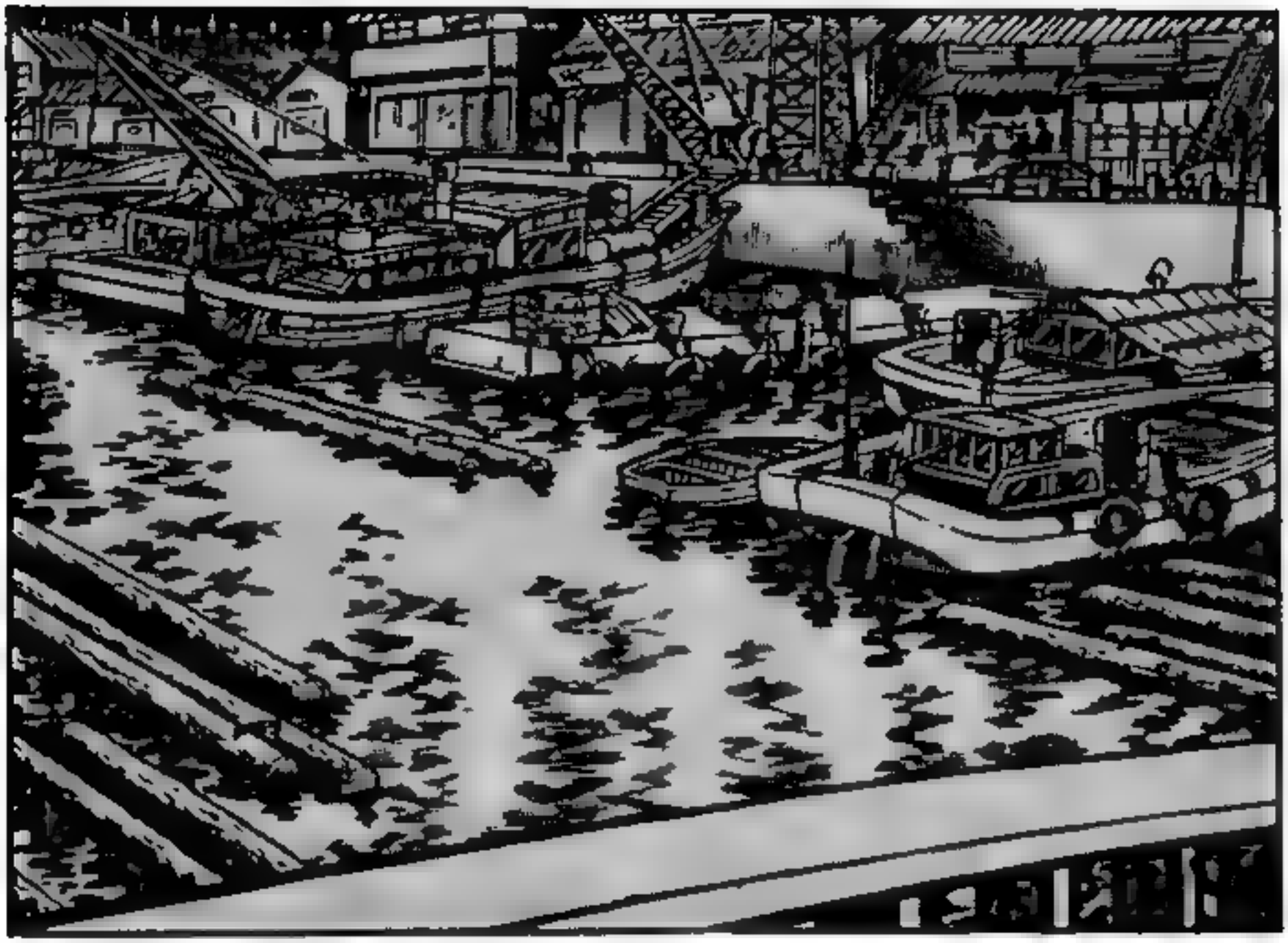
I'VE NEVER FELT ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE I STARTED BOXING.

I'M ACTUALLY FOND OF THE SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT I GET FROM BITING BACK WHILE MY BACK IS PRESSED TO THE WALL.

I FIGHT BECAUSE I LOVE TO FIGHT.

I'M NOT FIGHTING ON A SENSE OF DEBT OR OBLIGATION ALONE,

SO YOU SEE,



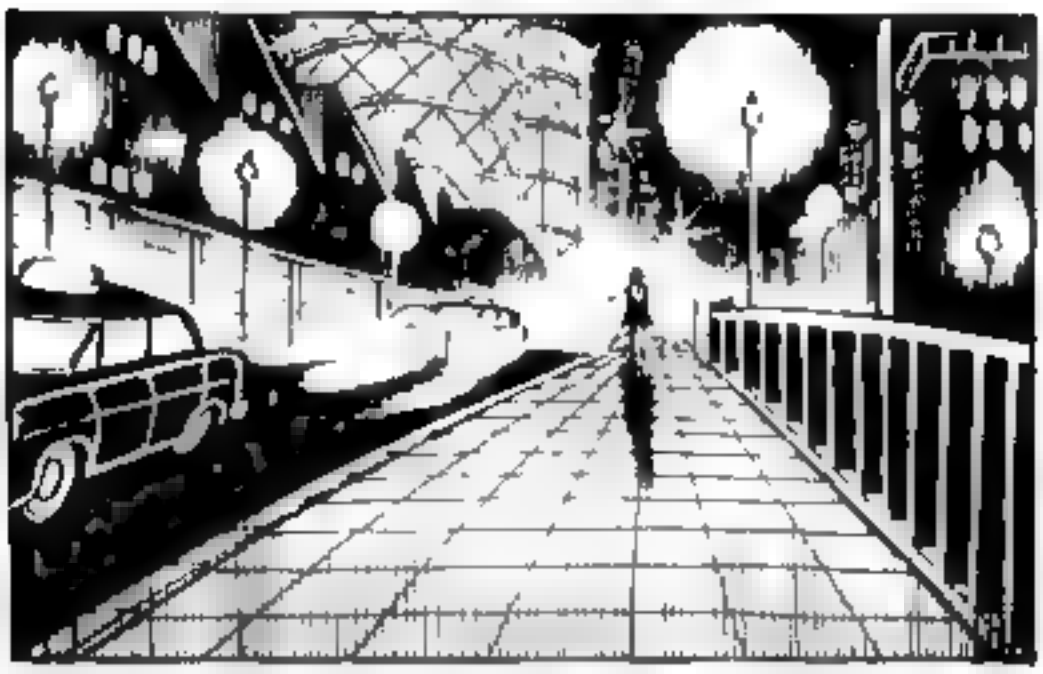
I DON'T THINK I CAN KEEP UP WITH YOU.

I... I THINK I SORT OF UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING BUT,

MY PARENTS WILL BE WORRIED IF I COME BACK ANY LATER, AND I'VE GOT LOTS TO HELP THEM OUT WITH AT THE STORE..
WELL... IT'S TIME FOR ME TO HEAD HOME.

BYE THEN.
I'LL COME BY THE GYM WITH LUNCH AGAIN SOME TIME.

SAY HI TO NISHI FOR ME.
THANKS FOR THE TOMATO SANDWICHES.



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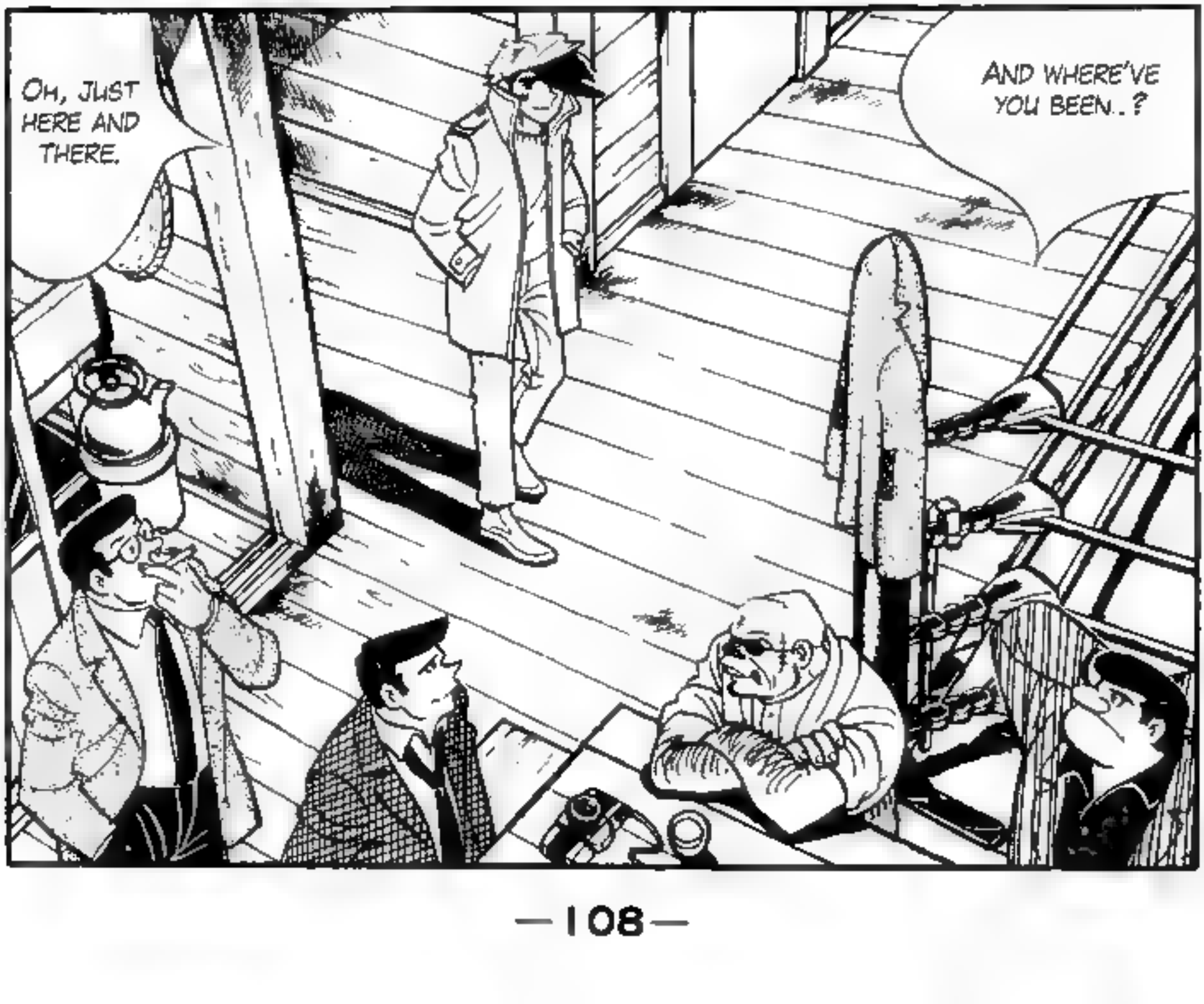

OH, JUST HERE AND THERE.
AND WHERE'VE YOU BEEN..?

THAT'S EXACTLY.. THE PROBLEM...

WE MAY HAVE DRIVEN OURSELVES INTO A CORNER.

WHAT'S WITH THE LONG FACES ON EVERYONE...?

HAVE YOU SCHEDULED MY NEXT MATCH YET?

AND WHY'S THAT...?

NONE OF THIS EXTRA COVERAGE WILL HELP US IF THERE AREN'T ANY GYMS WILLING TO FIGHT YOU.

EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE THE CENTER OF THE MEDIA'S ATTENTION THESE DAYS,

AND NOW WITH EVEN CARLOS' INCIDENT, THEY FEEL EVEN MORE THREATENED BY YOU.

THERE WERE THOSE TIMES WITH RIKIISHI AND WOLF IN THE PAST,

I SEE...

NOT JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE A STRONG BOXER, BUT BECAUSE YOU'RE LIKE A GRIM REAPER FOR OTHER BOXERS.

THEY'RE PROBABLY SCARED OF FIGHTING YOU.

THEY ALL TURNED ME AWAY AT THE DOOR.

NO MATTER WHAT THE FIGHT MONEY IS, THERE AREN'T ANY GYMS WILLING TO SACRIFICE THEIR PRECIOUS PLAYERS.

AIN'T I SOMETHIN'?

HAHA, SO KILLER JOE'S NOW BECOME GRIM REAPER JOE, HUH..

WELL, ALL THE JAPANESE BANTAM-WEIGHT-RANKERS...

WHAT LEVEL?

WHAT LEVEL OF OPPONENTS HAVE YOU BEEN TRYING TO FIND?

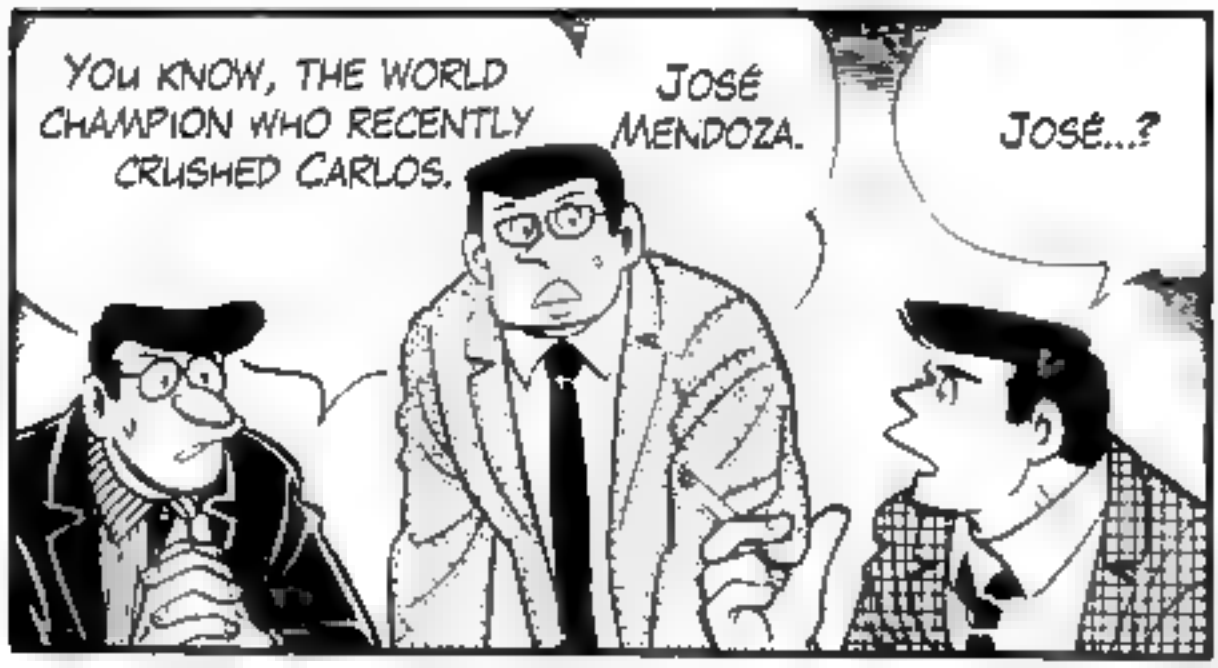
J-JOSÉ...?

HUH...?

AIMING A BIT LOW, I'D SAY.

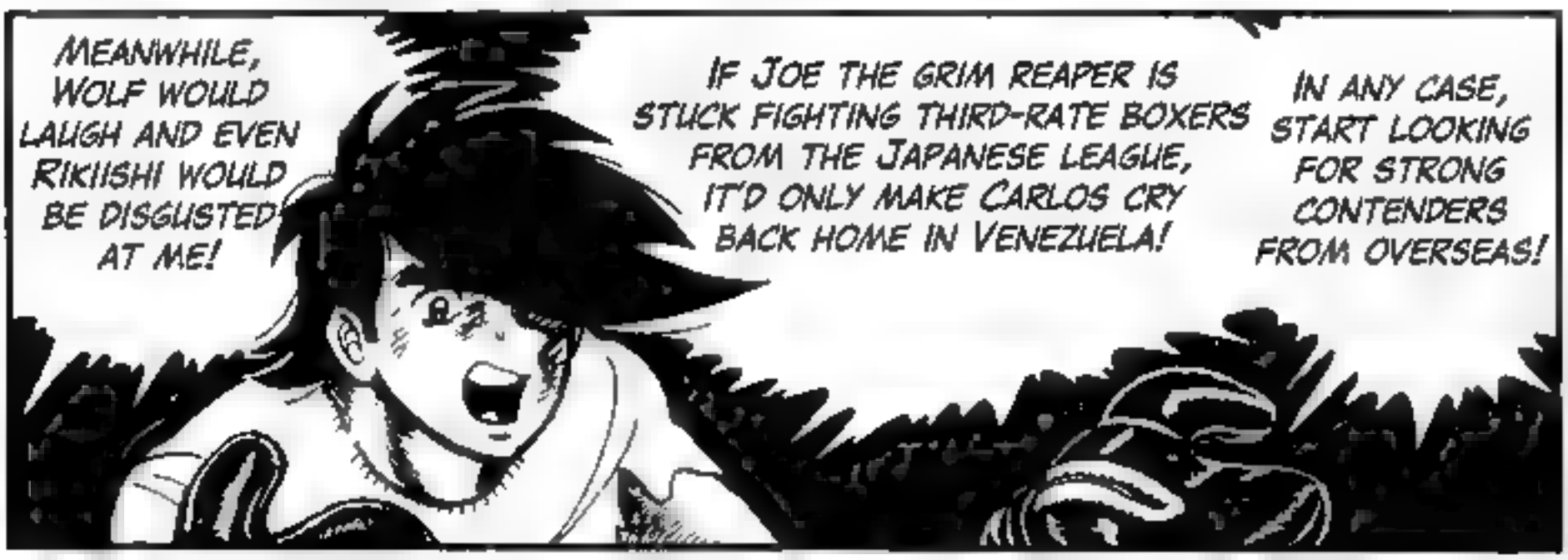
CAN'T YOU BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS AND GET ME SOMEONE CLOSER ON THE LEVEL OF JOSE MENDOZA?

IT'S DISAPPOINTING TO HEAR THAT YOU'RE STILL FISHING AROUND THE NATIONAL LEAGUE. .


YOU KNOW, THE WORLD CHAMPION WHO RECENTLY CRUSHED CARLOS.
JOSÉ MENDOZA.
JOSÉ...?

IF THE WORLD CHAMP'S NO GOOD, THEN BRING ME AT LEAST THE PACIFIC CHAMP!
EVEN IF YOU DID BREAK CARLOS, THE WORLD CHAMPION'S STILL-
THERE'RE PROPER STEPS FOR EVERYTHING.

A-ARE YOU... OUT OF YOUR MIND...?


MEANWHILE, WOLF WOULD LAUGH AND EVEN RIKIISHI WOULD BE DISGUSTED AT ME!
IF JOE THE GRIM REAPER IS STUCK FIGHTING THIRD-RATE BOXERS FROM THE JAPANESE LEAGUE, IT'D ONLY MAKE CARLOS CRY BACK HOME IN VENEZUELA!
IN ANY CASE, START LOOKING FOR STRONG CONTENDERS FROM OVERSEAS!

OLD MAN...

I AIN'T KIDDING AROUND SO BRING ME SOMEONE WORTH FIGHTING FOR GOD'S SAKE.

KA-

J-JOE...

I WANT TO GET UP ON THAT RING IF EVEN A SECOND SOONER!

I WANT TO FIGHT RIGHT NOW!

WELL, IT'LL MAKE FOR A GOOD ARTICLE NONETHELESS.

THANK GOD FOR THAT.

OR AT LEAST, STRANGER THAN USUAL.

HE SEEMS A LITTLE STRANGE.

WHAT'S WITH YABUKI TONIGHT?

9A

Grim Reap
Joe Sets Off
to Fulfill his
Ambition

Setting his sights higher than Japan, he aims to start from the Pacific league to reach for the world

His next opponent is 5th-ranked

Uthmann Somkit of Thailand

A match specially arranged by Manager Tange at Yabuki's desperate request

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

YOU'VE BEEN RESTLESS FOR A WHILE NOW

YOU'RE THE ONE THAT NEEDS TO STOP JITTERING AROUND AND SIT STILL. C'MERE THEN. I'LL BANDAGE YOUR FISTS.

I-IT'S ALMOST TIME.

YOU DO REALIZE I'M THE ONE GETTING UP ON THE RING AND FIGHTING, RIGHT? HAHA...

SO HOW 'BOUT YOU JUST SIT TIGHT AND MAYBE EVEN TAKE A NAP UNTIL THEY CALL FOR US.

SOUNDS LIKE THE SEMI-FINALS ARE OVER.

HAHA, YOU THINK I'M JITTERING AROUND?

DING DING DING

MM...

THANKS TO ALMOST EVERY FIGHT TONIGHT ENDING IN KOS SO FAR.

THE CROWD SEEMS EVEN MORE WORKED UP THAN USUAL,

I HEAR HE SWITCHED OVER FROM THAI BOXING...

A-ABOUT YOUR OPPONENT, LITHMANN SOMKIT...

AM I RIGHT?

ALL THE MORE REASON FOR THE MAIN EVENT TONIGHT TO ALSO END IN A KO-WIN,

YES, BETTER KNOWN AS KICKBOXING IN JAPAN.

THAI BOXING?

IF I'D ONLY KNOWN THAT SOONER, I WOULDN'T HAVE SPENT SO MUCH OF THE FIGHT MONEY FROM YOUR FIGHT WITH CARLOS TO CALL HIM OVER HERE.

I THINK HE WAS A BAD CHOICE...

KICKBOXING, EH?

MOST THAI BOXERS ARE UNUSUALLY TOUGH.

IT JUST MEANS HE'LL BE TOUGH.

IT AIN'T LIKE HE'S GONNA START KICKING ME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FIGHT.

WHY, WHAT'S WRONG WITH KICKBOXERS?

I HEAR THIS SOMKIT HASN'T EVEN ONCE SUFFERED A SLIP DOWN SINCE HE SWITCHED OVER TO BOXING.

SINCE THEY'RE USED TO TAKING KICKS, WHICH ARE 3-5 TIMES STRONGER THAN PUNCHES, THEY'RE NOT GONNA BE FAZED BY A SIMPLE PUNCH.

HE'S OBVIOUSLY NOT JUST TOUGH, BUT DAMN STRONG AS WELL!

HE'S RANKED 5TH IN THE PACIFIC!

DON'T LOOK DOWN ON HIM, JOE!

I'M PRETTY TOUGH MYSELF, IF YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED.

SO HE'S TOUGH. BIG DEAL.

BE MORE SERIOUS!

DAMN IT,

YOU'RE GONNA MAKE ME SICK BEFORE I EVEN STEP ONTO THE RING.

YEAH, YEAH. YOU DON'T HAVE TO YELL STUFF I ALREADY KNOW RIGHT INTO MY EAR.

WE'LL BE RIGHT THERE.

OH.. N-NOTHING.

W-WHAT'S GOING ON?

MR. TANGE, IT'S TIME. PLEASE COME TO THE RING WITH YOUR-

SO DON'T TRY TO RUSH THE FIGHT.

YOU'RE UP AGAINST A TOUGH FIGHTER, IN ANY CASE,

LET'S GO, JOE!

DON'T FORGET THE TOWEL AND VASELINE.

YEAH, YEAH. GOD, YOU'RE ANNOYING...

OTHERWISE, YOU'LL RUN OUT OF STEAM AND GET PUNISHED SEVERELY FOR IT.

WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YA, KILLER JOE! NO, WAIT... YOU'VE BEEN UPGRADED TO GRIM REAPER JOE NOW, RIGHT!?

YABUKI JOE'S FINALLY COMING OUT!

IT'S THE GRIM REAPER!

SO SHOW US A REAL FIGHT, Y'HEAR!?

I QUIT WORK EARLY TODAY JUST TO SEE YOU!

AND HERE COMES YABUKI JOE, THE MAN WHO FOUGHT AGAINST CARLOS RIVERA IN FRONT OF 37,000 PEOPLE AT A PACKED BASEBALL STADIUM ON THAT VERY MEMORABLE NIGHT.
DRINK
TRADEMARK
NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE STADIUM HERE TONIGHT IS PACKED AS WELL!

HE'S A FORMER THAI-BOXER WHO'S SWITCHED TO BOXING IN RECENT YEARS.

HIS OPPONENT TONIGHT, WHO YABUKI MUST BEAT IF HE INTENDS TO FULFILL HIS GOAL OF CONQUERING THE PACIFIC LEAGUE, IS UTHMANN SOMKIT.

EVEN SO, THIS IS STILL QUITE A CROWD...

YES, IT SEEMS YABUKI'S POPULARITY HAS RESURGED.

AND THERE HE IS! HIS SHARP EYES ARE LIKE A HAWK'S!

HE BOLDLY STEPS ON TO THE RING, WHILE ASSISTED BY HIS SECONDS.

AT 118 POUNDS, UTHMANN SOMKIT!

IN THE RED CORNER,

THE BANTAMWEIGHT CHAMPION OF THAILAND AND 5TH-RANKED FIGHTER IN THE PACIFIC LEAGUE.

HEY, HE CALLED YOUR NAME!

YABUKI JOE!

AT 117.5 POUNDS...

AND IN THE BLUE CORNER, THE 6TH RANKED BANTAMWEIGHT FIGHTER OF JAPAN FROM TANGE BOXING CLUB,

SHEESH.

WOULD IT KILL YA TO GIVE A LITTLE MORE ENTHUSIASM WHEN GREETING THE CROWD?

BOTH PLAYERS REPORT TO THE CENTER OF THE RING!

WELL... YABUKI'S A RATHER INCONSISTENT FIGHTER.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
WILL YABUKI BE ABLE TO BEAT SOMKIT AND MAKE HIS MARK ON THE PACIFIC LEAGUE?
NOW THEN, HOW WILL THIS MATCH UNFOLD?

A FIGHER AS UNPREDICTABLE AS A FALL-SKY... THAT IS BOTH HIS GREATEST ATTRACTION AND WEAKNESS.
EVEN IF HE DID BREAK THE WORLD-RANKER CARLOS RIVERA, IT'S NOT GUARANTEED WHETHER THE SAME FEROCITY HE SHOWED IN THAT FIGHT WILL COME OUT AGAIN TONIGHT.

...

DON'T YOU DARE RUSH THIS FIGHT. JUST STEADILY BANG HIM UP IN THE FIRST HALF, AND THEN GO FOR THE FINISH IN THE SECOND HALF.

L-LISTEN UP, JOE.

HE'S GOT TATTOOS ALL OVER...

WHOA, LOOK AT SOMKIT'S BODY...

I THINK IT'S THE THAI-EQUIVALENT OF THE LION OF TREE PEONY TATTOO.

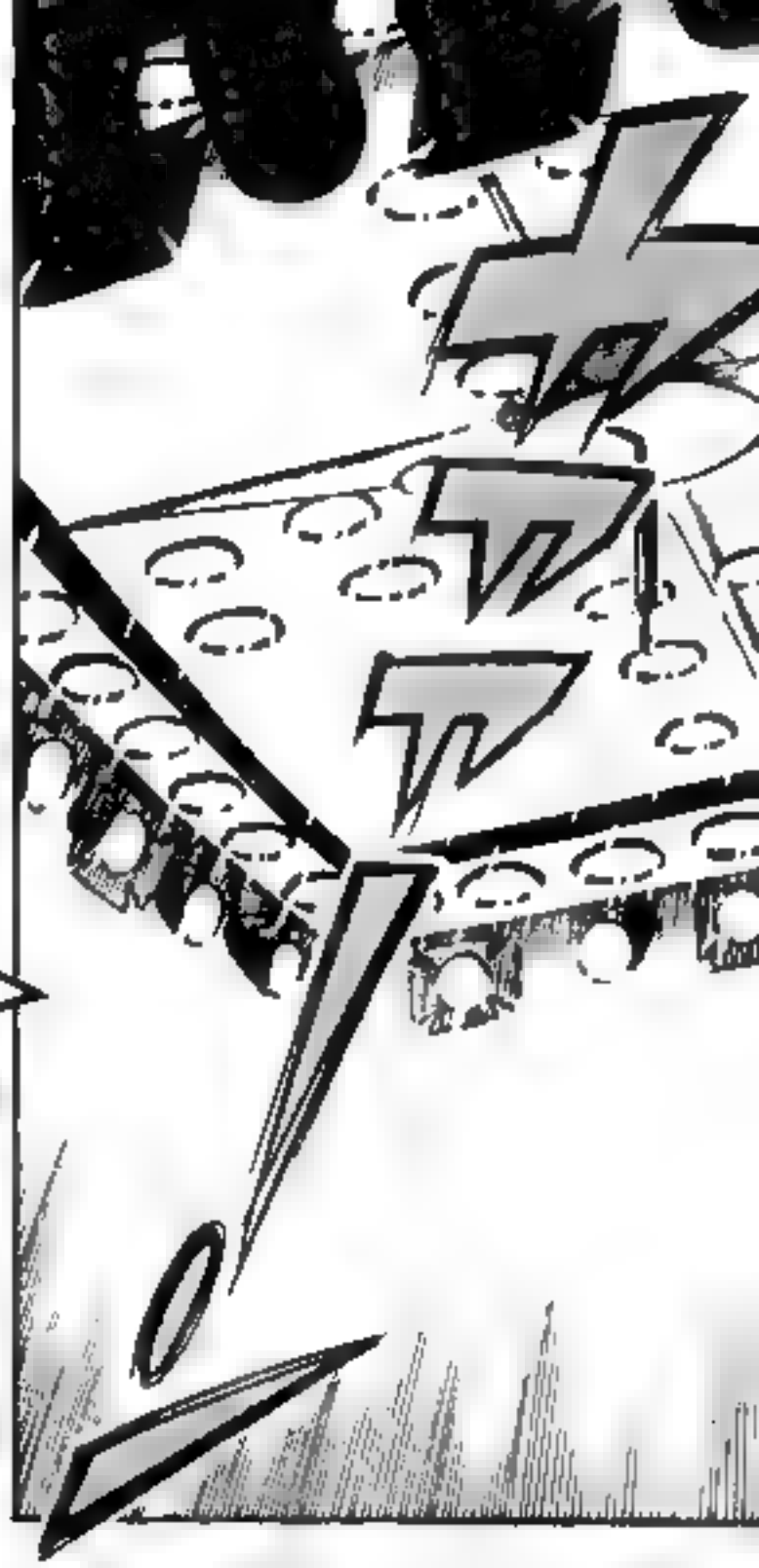
DON'T PAY ANY ATTENTION TO HIS INTIMIDATING TATOO!

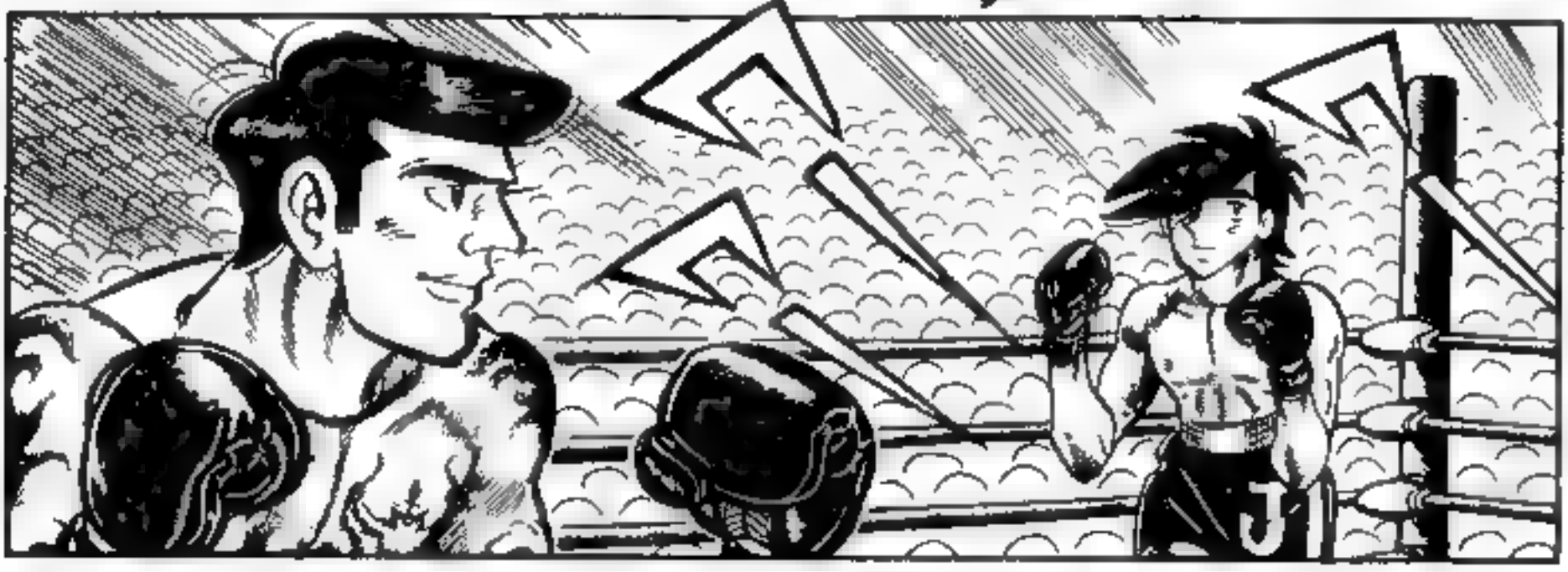
IF HE THINKS HE CAN KICK YOU, KICK HIS ASS RIGHT BACK!

RUN WILD, YABUKI!

AHAHAHAHA!

SLOW AND
STEADY, Y'HEAR!?

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BUT A FORMER KICKBOXER USED TO TAKING KICKS WON'T BE FAZED BY MERE BODY BLOWS.

A RECKLESS ATTACK, INDEED.

YABUKI RUSHES TOWARDS LITHMANN AS SOON AS THE BELL RINGS!

AFTER ALL THOSE WARNINGS, HE...

T-THAT IDIOT.

E-EVEN SO, YABUKI CONTINUES ON WITH THE BARRAGE OF BODY BLOWS!

AND A LOOK OF MILD ANNOYANCE, SOMKIT BRINGS HIS GUARD DOWN LOW...

WITH A SLIGHTLY PAINED GRIN,

AHH-

AHHH!

HAHHH!

HE'S KNOCKED DOWN AND SENT OUT OF THE RING!

S-SOMKIT IS DOWN!

ACK!

THE FIGHT ENDS IN AN INCREDIBLE KO-WIN FOR YABUKI!

IN JUST A MINUTE AND 6 SECONDS INTO THE FIRST ROUND,

I DOUBT HE CAN STAND UP AFTER THAT!

S-SOMKIT!
OH GOD!
C-CALL A DOCTOR!
THE STRETCHER! BRING THE STRETCHER!

A POWERFUL SERIES OF BODY BLOWS TO GET SOMKIT TO BRING DOWN HIS GUARD GAVE YABUKI THE CHANCE HE NEEDED TO AIM A DEVASTATING PUNCH TO THE FACE AND SETTLE THE FIGHT.

YOU SENT CHILLS DOWN MY SPINE, GRIM REAPER!

YOU DID IT AGAIN!

THAT WAS INCREDIBLE!

AHAHAHA! YOU DID IT!

STOP PUSHING, FOLKS!

HE LIKELY HAS A CONCUSSION SO TRY NOT TO MOVE HIS HEAD!

YABUKI, CAN YOU PLEASE COME OVER TO THE BROADCAST SEAT FOR AN INTERVIEW!?

AHAHAHA...

COME RIGHT THIS WAY, YABUKI JOE!

L-LET'S MAKE ROOM FOR OUR GUEST!

YOU TOO, PRESIDENT TANGE!

TO THINK A FORMER KICKBOXER COULD BE BEATEN SO THOROUGHLY..

UNBE-LIEV-ABLE...

AHAHAHA, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

WE'VE JUST BROUGHT YABUKI OVER TO THE BROADCAST BOOTH AFTER HIS GLORIOUS PERFORMANCE. I BELIEVE CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER FIRST.

A KO-WIN IN THE FIRST ROUND! TALK ABOUT A SWIFT OFFENSIVE!

HEY, STOP SHOVIN'!
EVEN IF YOU DID CRIPPLE THE 6TH RANKED BOXER IN THE WORLD, I NEVER WOULD'VE IMAGINED YOU'D KO THE 5TH RANKED FIGHTER IN THE PACIFIC LEAGUE IN BARELY A MINUTE!
IT WAS OVER IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE!
OWW OWW!
HEY, I THINK YOU'RE ON TV!
BLEHHHH!

OH... RIGHT.
JOE, HE'S ASKING YOU. GIVE HIM AN ANSWER.
A-ANYWAYS YABUKI, YOU WENT ON A FIERCE OFFENSIVE RIGHT FROM THE GET-GO. NOW WAS THAT BECAUSE YOU WERE CONFIDENT YOU COULD EASILY HANDLE SOMKIT?
OH...
I WASN'T THAT CONFIDENT OR ANYTHING..
NOT REALLY ...

AHAHAHA, ABOUT THAT, ACTUALLY...

WAS IT YOU WHO TOLD JOE TO GO FULL-OUT RIGHT FROM THE START?

THEN CAN I ASSUME THAT THIS WAS ALL ACCORDING TO YOUR PLAN, MR. TANGE?

A HA HA HA!

O-OF COURSE NOT! HE BARELY EVEN KNEW WHAT KIND OF BOXER SOMKIT WAS COMING INTO THIS BATTLE!

I ACTUALLY WARNED HIM TO BE CAUTIOUS AND NOT OVERDO THINGS BUT WELL, WE ALL KNOW HOW THAT TURNED OUT.

IT WAS ALL HIS IDEA, REALLY...

AHAHAHA. I FEEL PRETTY EMBARRASSED AS HIS COACH NOW.

I DID, I DID.

YEAH... THE OLD MAN HERE MENTIONED THAT JUST BEFORE I CAME OUT ON THE RING.

YABUKI, WERE YOU AWARE THAT SOMKIT WAS A FORMER THAI KICK-BOXER WHO HAD NEVER SUFFERED A SINGLE DOWN UP UNTIL TONIGHT?

I JUST THOUGHT THAT... IT'D BE RUDE TO DRAG OUT A FIGHT AGAINST THE PACIFIC LEAGUE'S 5TH RANKED FIGHTER.

NOT REALLY

THAT'S NOT HOW I FELT AT THE TIME.

DID HEARING THAT PERHAPS SPUR YOU ON INTO FIGHTING EVEN MORE AGGRESSIVELY?

TO RIVERA,

WHO RECENTLY BECAME CRIPPLED...

RUDE? TO WHOM?

HE'LL BE FINE UP AGAINST ANY RANKED FIGHTER IN THE PACIFIC OR EVEN THE WORLD!

AHAHAHA... WELL IN ANY CASE, JOE'S NOW STRONGER THAN EVER!

AH... I SEE..

SAY FOLKS, WOULDN'T YA AGREE THAT HE'S MATURED INTO THE REAL THING NOW? AHAHAHA!

W-WAIT, WE STILL HAVE TIME LEFT! YABUKI, WAIT!

LET'S GO.

THAT'S ENOUGH...

I FELL FOR YOU ALL OVER AGAIN!

YOU'RE THE MAN!

SHAKE MY HAND, YABUKI!

HEH HEH, LET ME TOUCH HIM TOO!

SHAKE MY HAND TOO!

NOT YOU!

AHAHAHA! THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

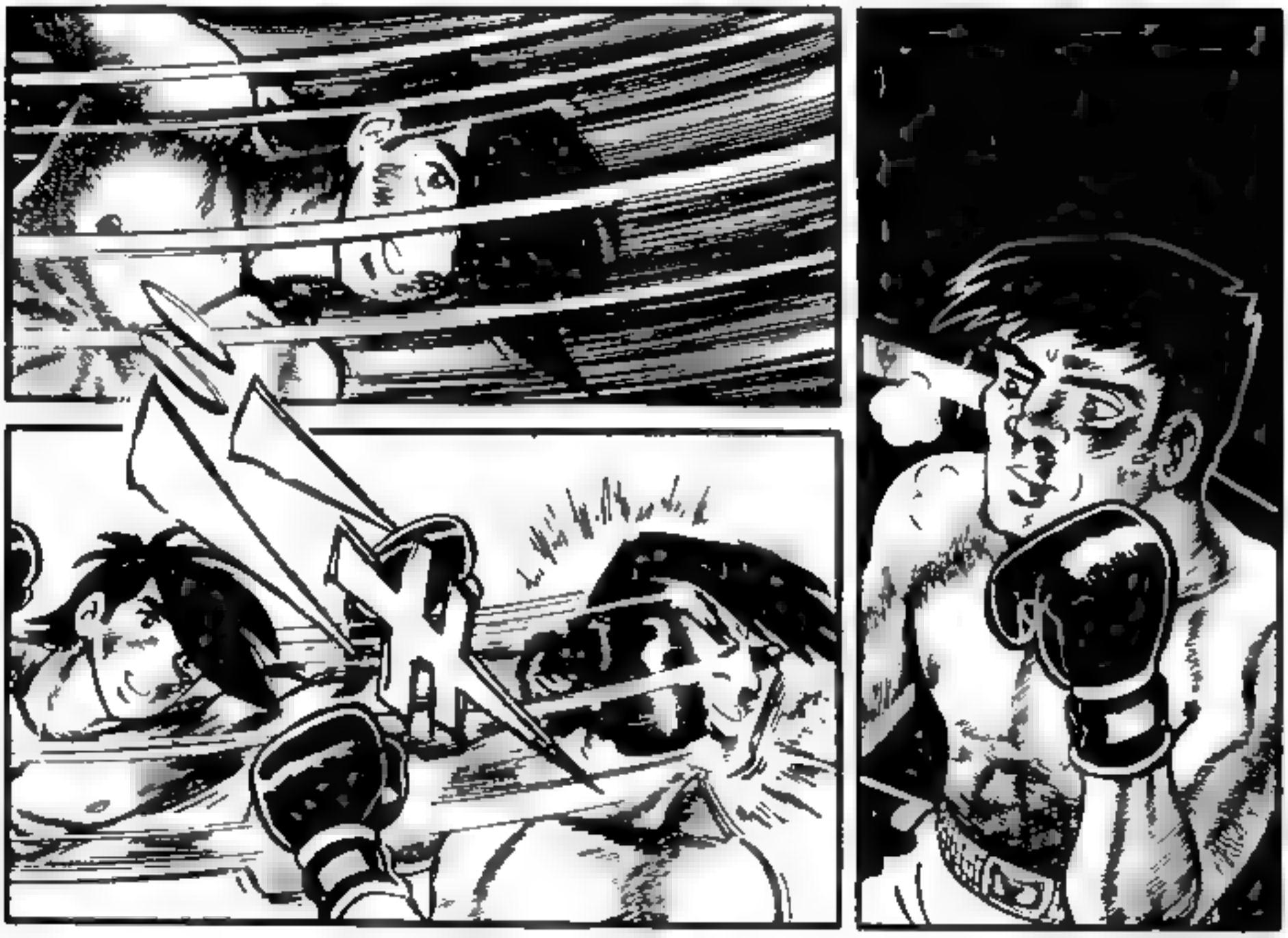
THE ERA OF YABUKI HAS COME AT LAST!

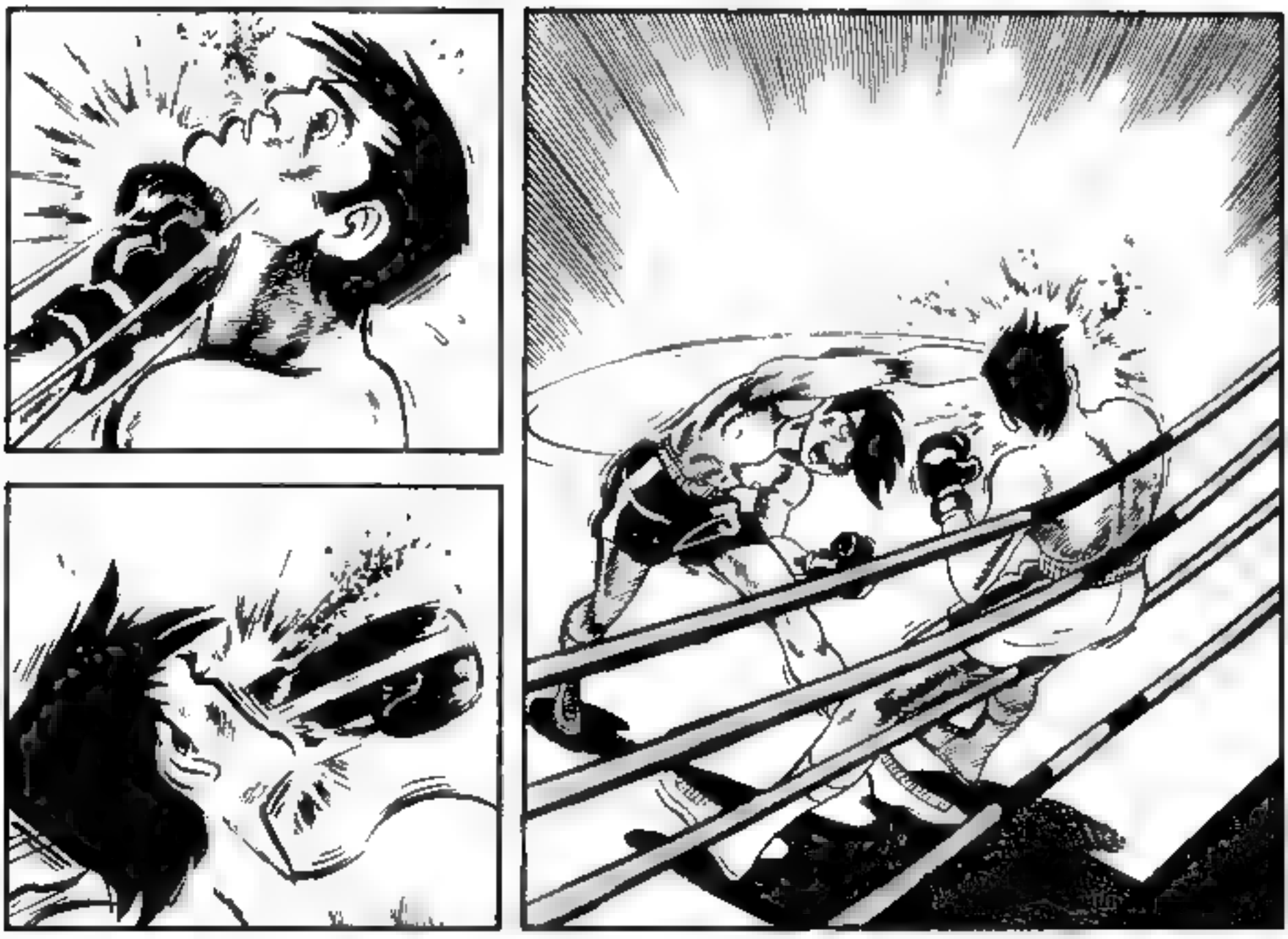
WELL THERE YOU HAVE IT, FOLKS! A GREAT STAR IS BORN IN THE JAPANESE BOXING WORLD!

INDEED.

HE STILL SEEMS HIS USUAL SELF OFF THE RING BUT.. HE CERTAINLY SEEMS LIKE A CHANGED FIGHTER ON THE RING.

NICKNAMED "KILLER JOE" AND NOW EVEN GLORIFIED AS THE GRIM REAPER, YABUKI JOE STEADILY CONTINUED TO RISE.
NOT EVEN 3 WEEKS LATER, IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE KOREAN BANTAMWEIGHT CHAMPION, KIM BINWAN...

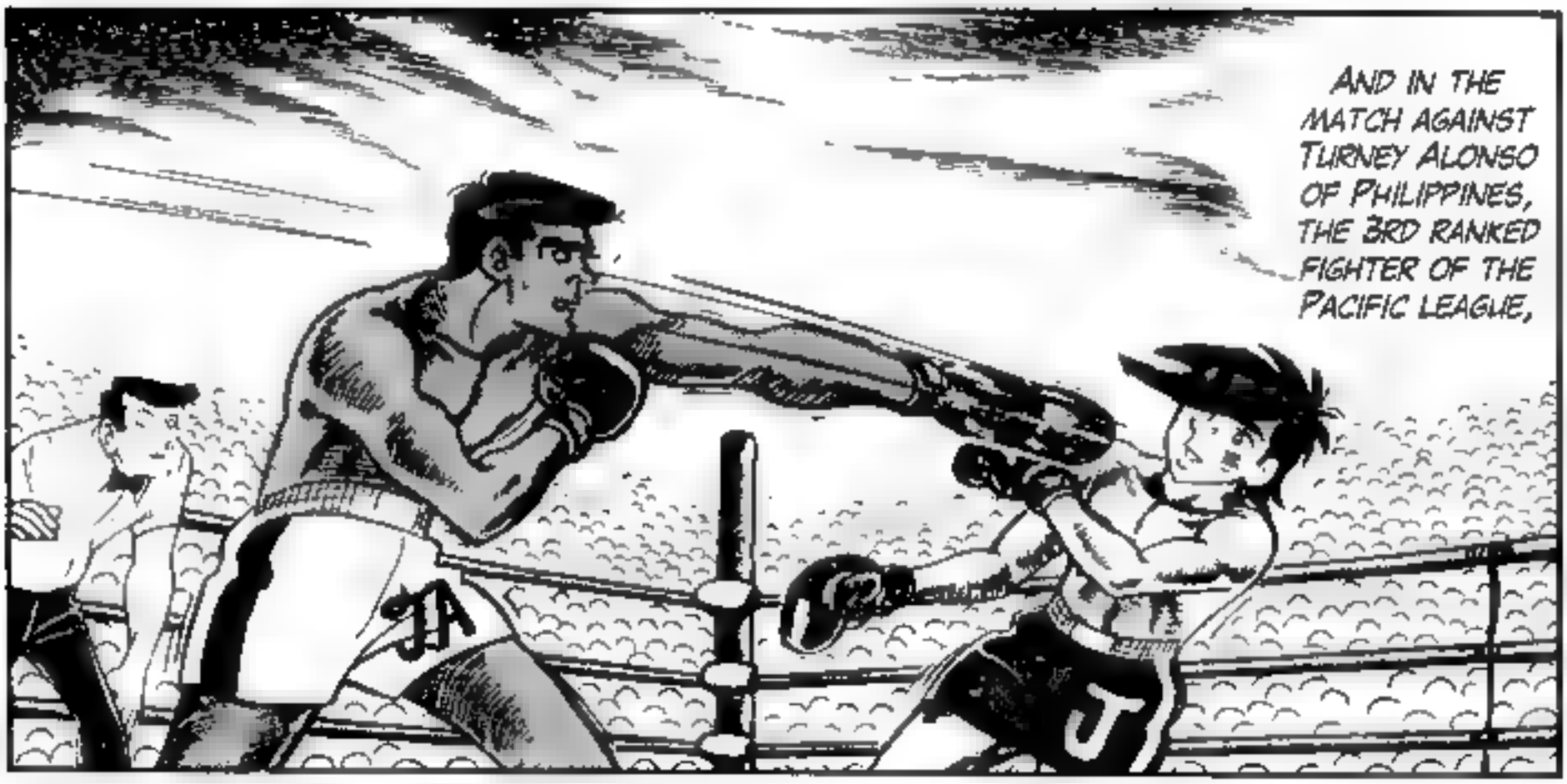


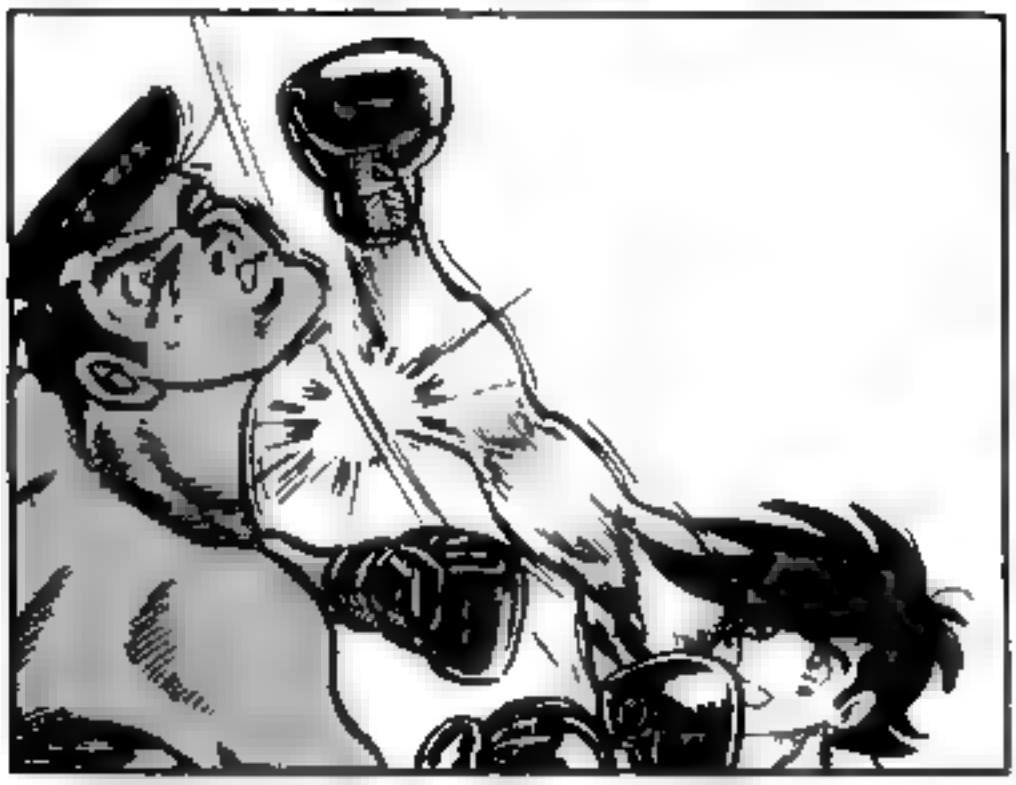

A KO-WIN
1:36 IN
ROUND 4!

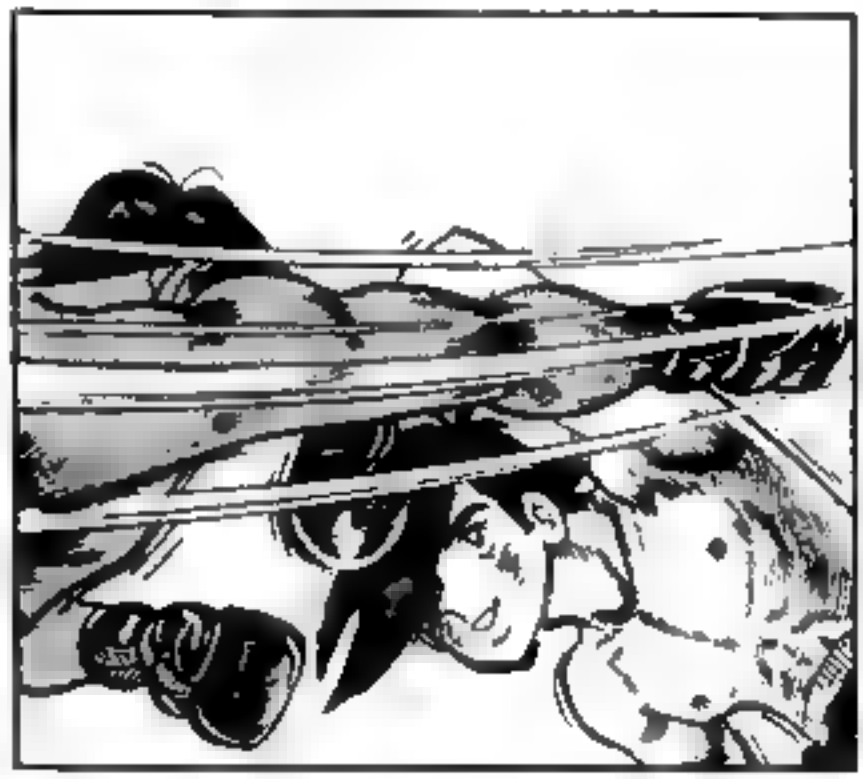
2:41 IN THE 6TH ROUND...

NEXT WAS THE JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT BOXER EDDY BESERRA OF ARGENTINA.

THE WHITE TOWEL WAS THROWN FROM BESERRA'S CORNER!


AND IN THE MATCH AGAINST TURNEY ALONSO OF PHILIPPINES, THE 3RD RANKED FIGHTER OF THE PACIFIC LEAGUE,





YABUKI WINS BY DOWNING ALONSO THREE TIMES JUST 2:54 IN THE SECOND ROUND!

ANOTHER TOWEL THROWN IN THE RING!
GRIM REAPER JOE CONTINUES HIS WINNING STREAK!
YABUKI JOE'S METEORIC RISE CONTINUES!
MANAGER TANGE CAN'T STOP SMILI

YOUNG HOPEFULS FROM ALL OVER JAPAN CAME FLOCKING TO THE GYM AFTER SEEING JOE'S PHENOMENAL STRENGTH.

THE TANGE GYM SUDDENLY BECAME MUCH LIVELIER.

DANPEI SPENT MOST OF HIS DAYS ATTENDING TO THESE NEWCOMERS.

WITH THE SMALL SHACK UNDER THE BRIDGE RUNNING OUT OF SPACE, HE DECIDED TO BUILD A NEW GYM IN THE ADJACENT EMPTY LOT.

OOPS, WOULD YOU LOOK AT THE TIME...

THE NEW TRAINING EQUIPMENT AND FURNITURE HELPED IN MAKING THE GYM LOOK BRIGHTER THAN EVER.

YOU'RE STILL AWAKE?

WHAT IS IT, KOUNO?

PRESIDENT TANGE...

SO I BETTER HEAD OFF TO BED.

I GOTTA GET UP EARLY TOMORROW MORNING TO SUPERVISE THE TRAINING FOR THE NEWBIES,

WELL,

HE'S OVER THERE IN THE OLD GYM.

HE WON'T RESPOND AT ALL EVEN WHEN I CALL OUT TO HIM.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH JOE?

HM?

YABUKI SEEMS A LITTLE STRANGE.

UMM...

IT'S PITCH BLACK IN HERE...

JUST WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE IN THE DARK?

OH, THERE YOU ARE, JOE.

OH, IT'S YOU...
AH-

I'M ASKING YOU WHAT YOU'RE DOING HERE IN THE DARK!
JOE!

フ…!!

WELL? WHAT'S GOING ON?

WHAT WERE YOU DOING?

RIGHT.

TURN ON THE LIGHTS, KOUNO.

NOTHING...

MAYBE THAT'S WHY I WANDERED IN HERE AND SPACED OUT.

I'M NOT SURE WHY BUT I JUST FEEL A LOT CALMER IN THIS OLD RUN-DOWN SHACK.

HAHA..

ARE YOU FEELING UNWELL?

YOU SEEM A LITTLE OUT OF IT...

OOF-

NOPE, I'M IN TIP-TOP SHAPE.

....

MY GUNS ARE BEGGING ME FOR SOME ACTION THESE DAYS.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, HOW'S THE PACIFIC TITLE MATCH DEAL COMING ALONG?

I'M STILL NEGOTIATING...
I THINK HE'S SCARED OF FIGHTING YOU. THAT'S WHY THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE STILL DRAGGING ON.
THE PACIFIC CHAMP'S PROBABLY BEEN KEEPING A KEEN EYE ON YOUR RECENT BLAZE OF GLORY...
I'LL BE GLAD TO TAKE ON ANYONE STRONG.
WELL, IT CAN BE SOMEONE ELSE.
OTHERWISE, IF YOU CONTINUE TO LEAVE ME HANGING, I'M GONNA GET ALL STRESSED OUT!

HERE.

WHEN'S THE TV NETWORK'S PARTY SUPPOSED TO BE AGAIN?

BRING US A TOWEL, KOUNO.

HUFF

HUFF

HUFF

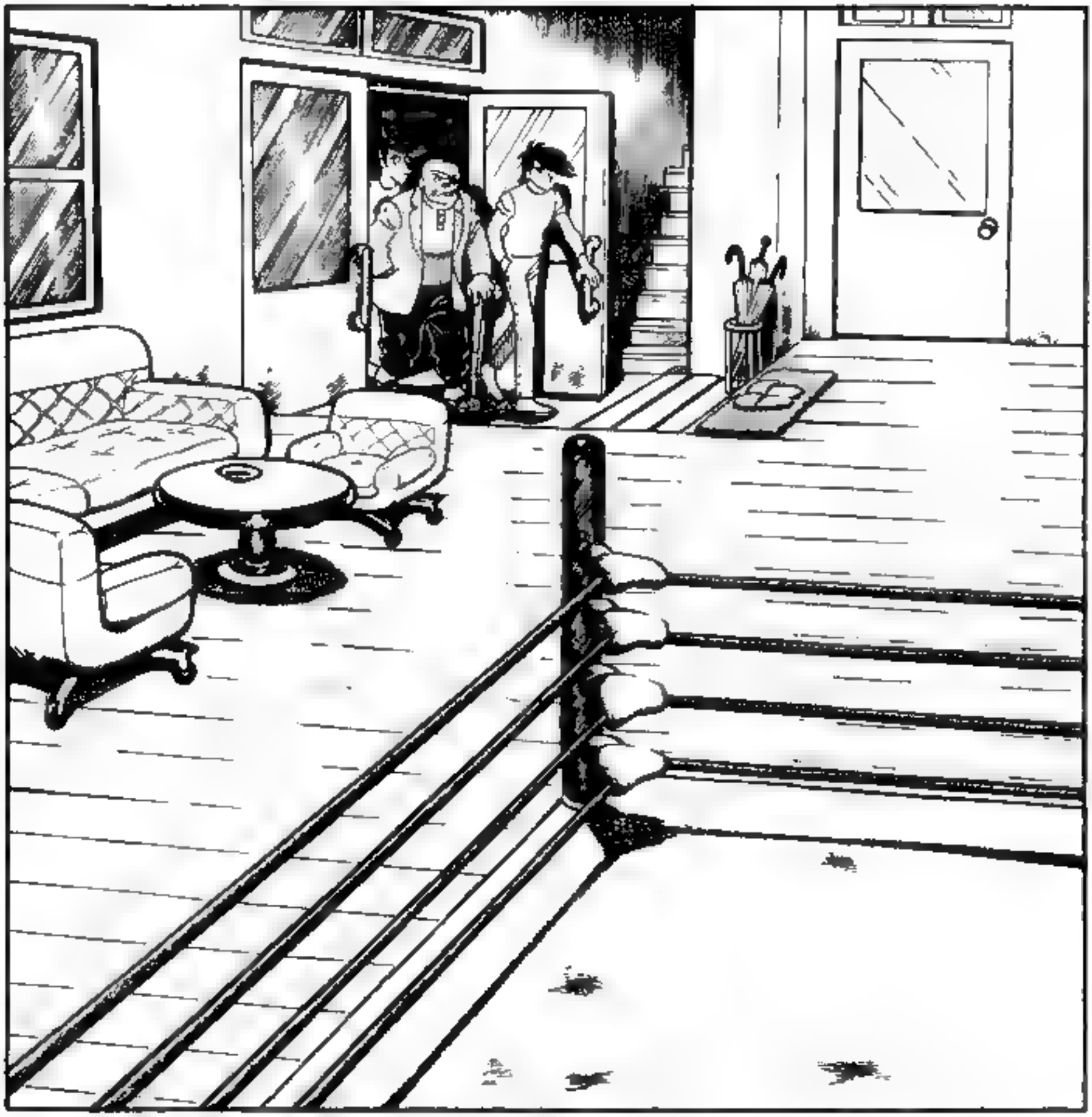
WE CAN'T SKIP OUT ON THAT, RIGHT?

TOMORROW NIGHT AT SIX.

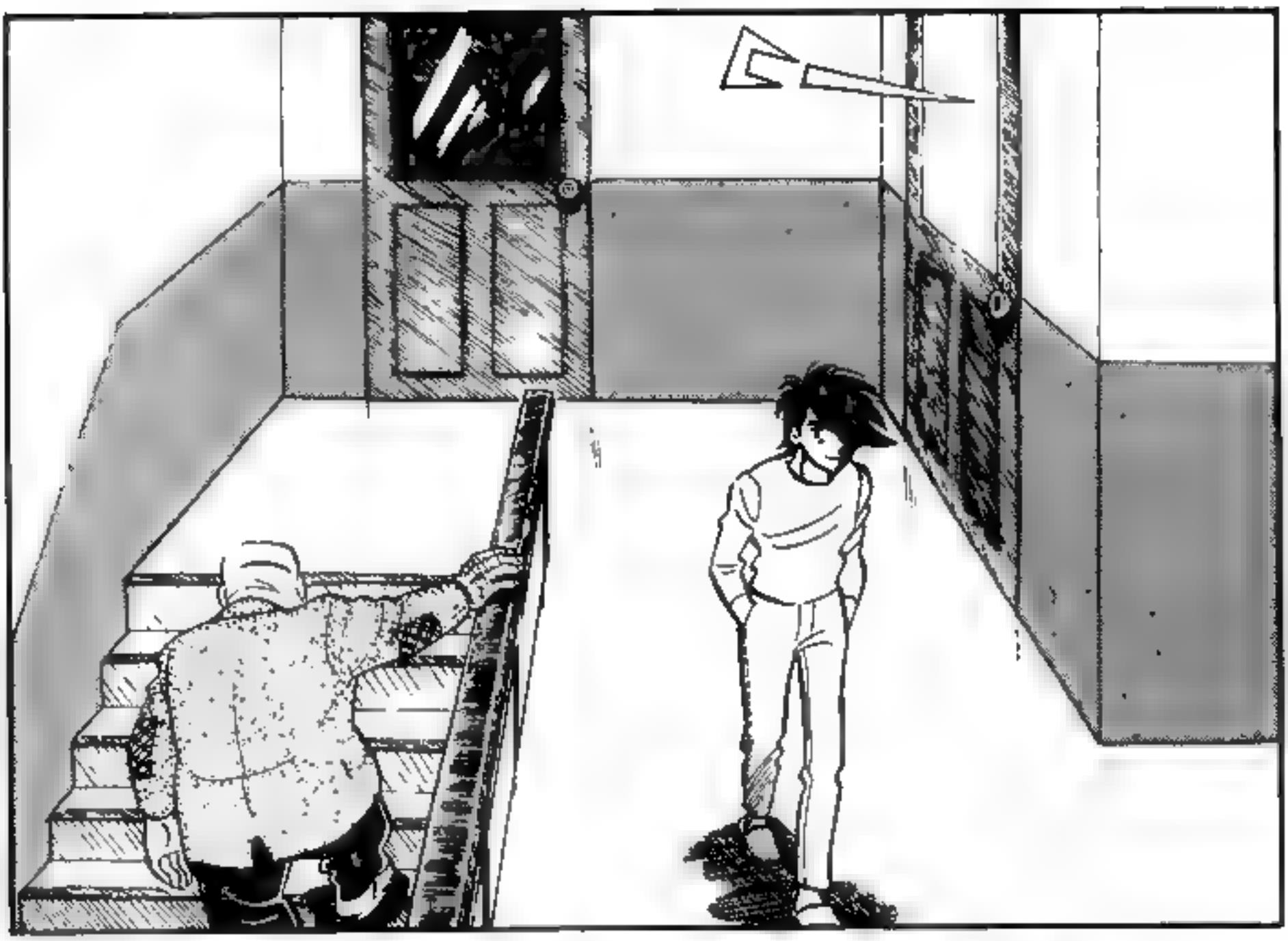
HERE, WIPE YOURSELF.

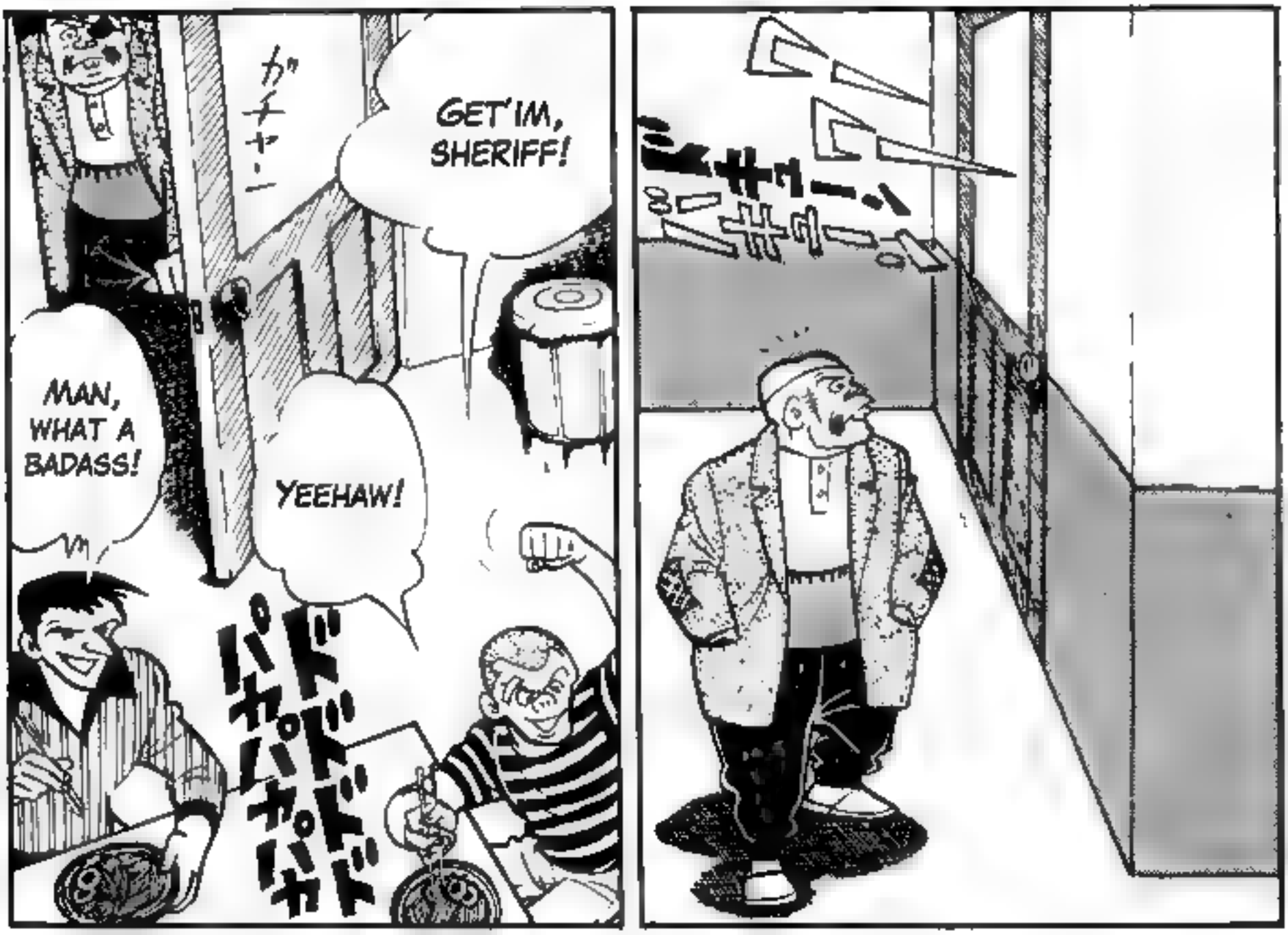
THE PARTY'S TO CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR WINNING STREAK. 'COURSE YOU CAN'T SKIP OUT.

GUESS I'LL GO TO BED THEN...



GOT IT.
AND MAKE SURE ALL THE LIGHTS ARE TURNED OFF DOWNSTAIRS.
DON'T FORGET TO LOCK THE DOOR.

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GET'IM, SHERIFF!
MAN, WHAT A BADASS!
YEEHAW!
パパパパパパパパ

W-WE WERE JUST, UHH... CONTEMPLATING THIS EVENING'S TELEVISION PROGRAMMING.

CONTEM-PLATIN', MY ASS!

WHAT'RE YOU GUYS DOING?

OH, GOOD EVENING, SIR.

G-GOT'CHA...

YOU SHITS HAVE ENOUGH TROUBLE WAKING UP EARLY IN THE MORNING AS IT IS ALREADY!

GET YOUR ASSES TO BED ALREADY!

LET'S GO TO BED!

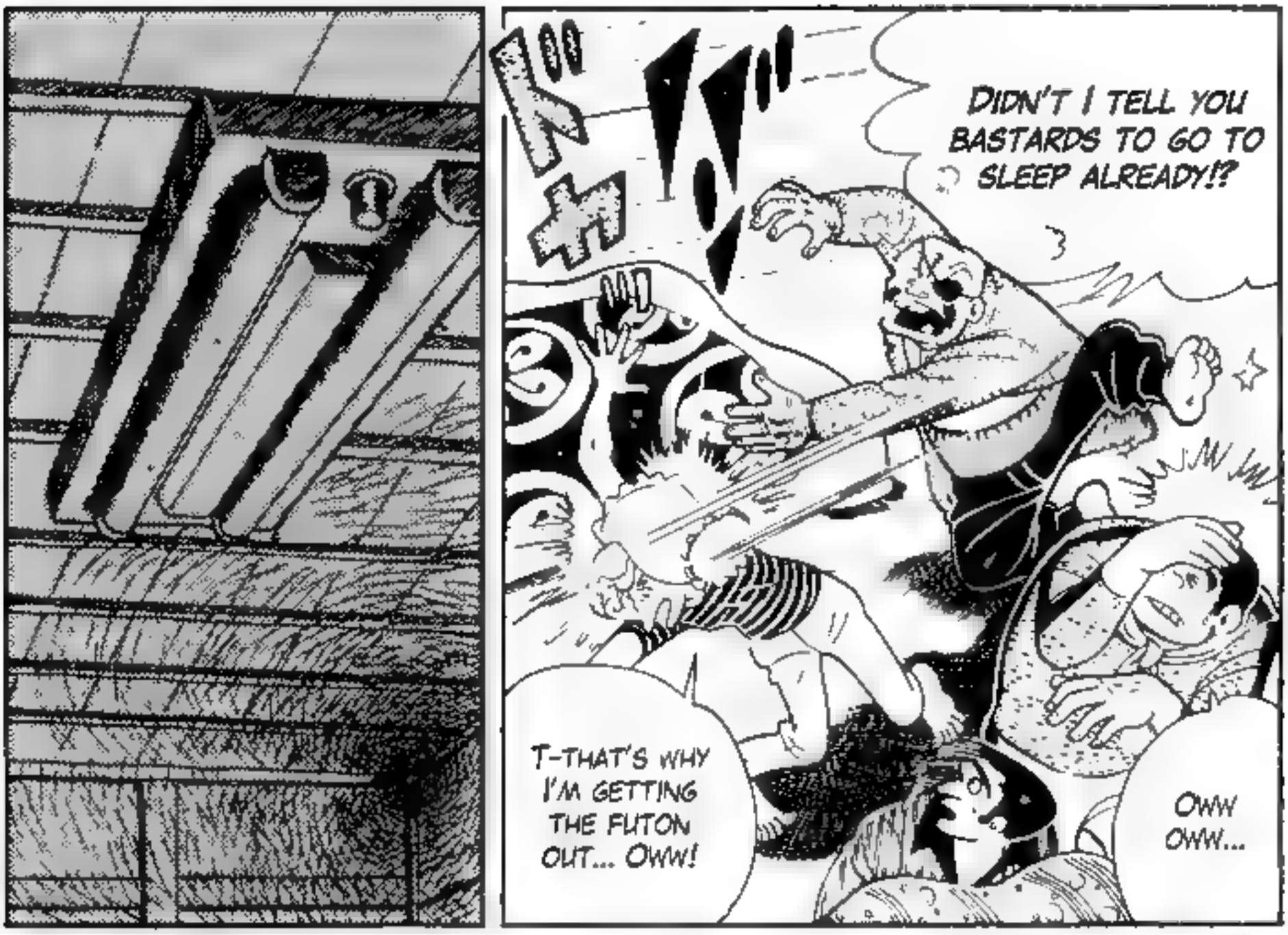
OH HEY, YABUKI!

OH YOU DON'T NEED TO DO THAT. WE'LL GET THE FUTON AND BLANKETS OUT.

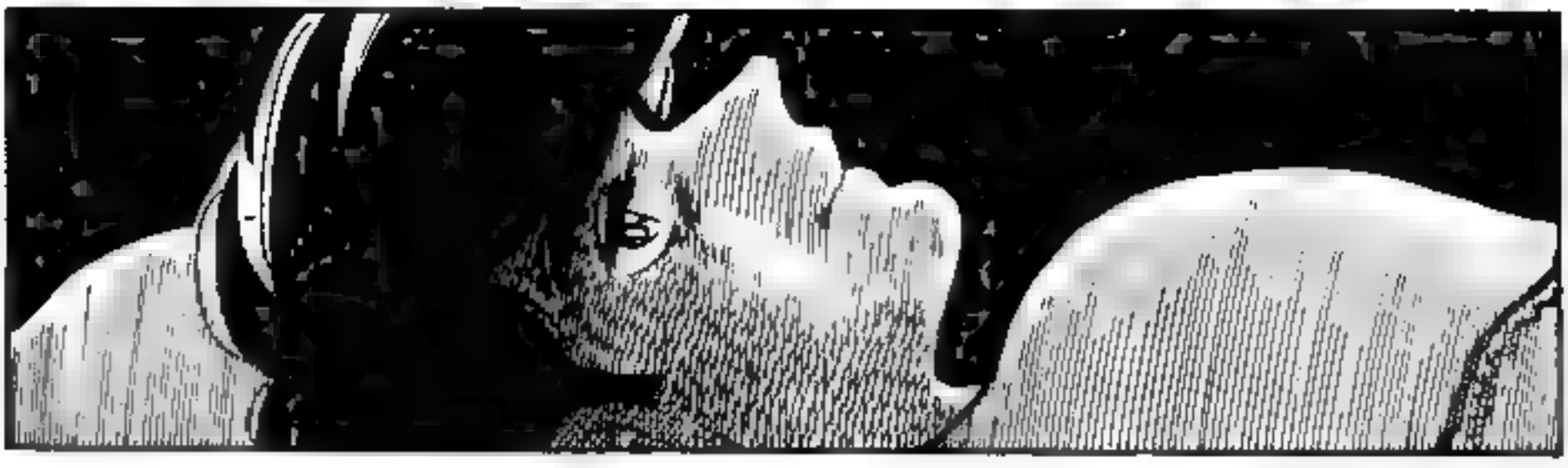
HEY.

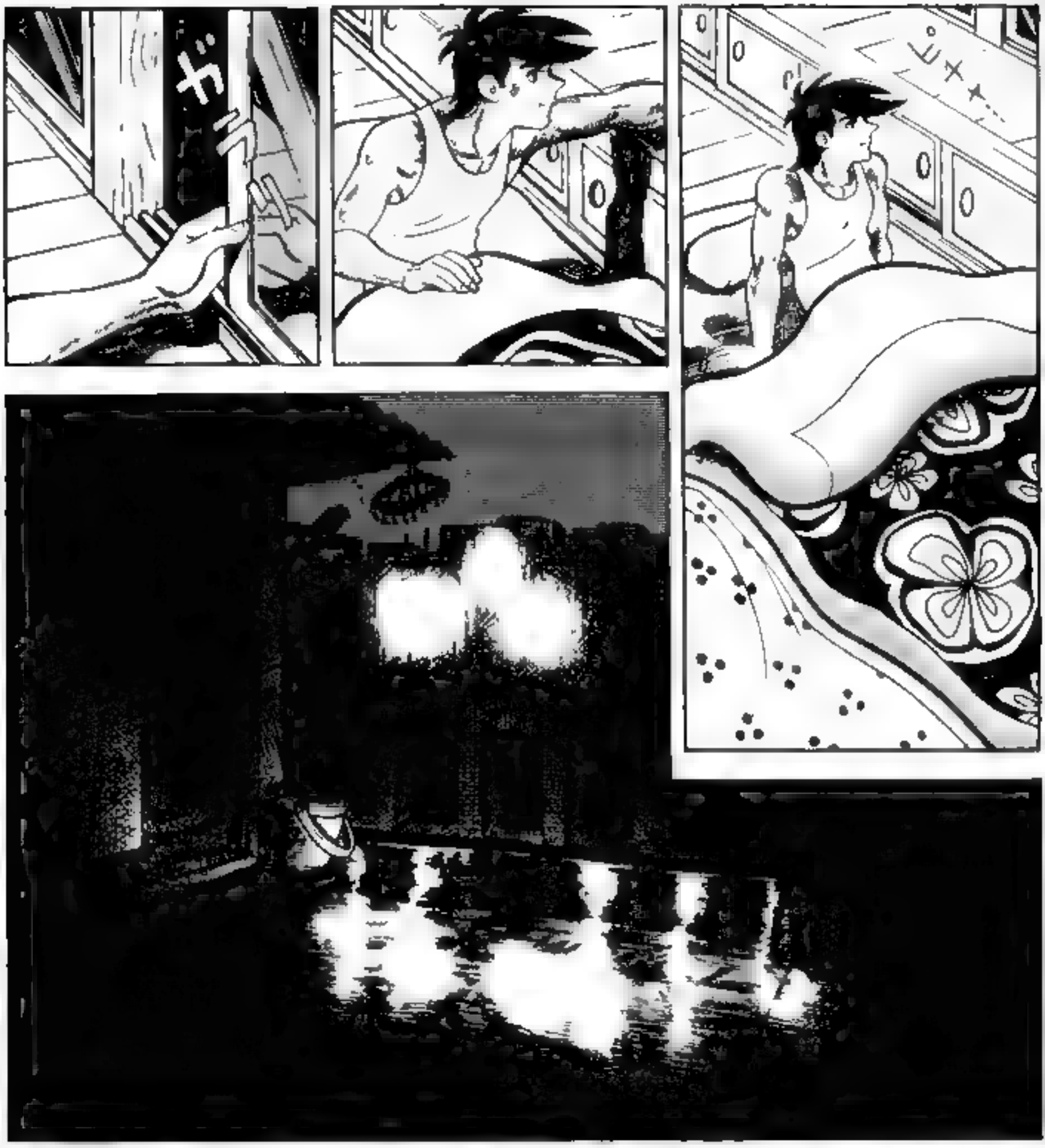
MAYBE A LITTLE DATE WITH A CERTAIN SOMEONE? HEH HEH.

WHERE WERE YOU ALL NIGHT LONG?


DIDN'T I TELL YOU BASTARDS TO GO TO SLEEP ALREADY!?
T-THAT'S WHY I'M GETTING THE FUTON OUT... OWW!
OWW OWW...

MUMBLE MUMBLE
SNORE...
ZZZ...

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HAVING TROUBLE SLEEPING?

IT'S RAINING …

THAT'S WHY I'M HAVING TROUBLE SLEEPING THESE DAYS.

I THINK I JUST HAVEN'T BEEN TRAINING ENOUGH...

YES.

YOU SHOULD GO TO SLEEP.

OH, YOU'RE AWAKE TOO?

DON'T GO AROUND WORRYING ABOUT CRAP LIKE THAT.

IT'S GOT NOTHIN' TO DO WITH YOU GUYS.

YOU MUST BE LOSING OUT ON TRAINING TIME SINCE YOU HAVE TO HELP LOOK AFTER US.

SORRY ABOUT THAT.

GOOD NIGHT.

WELL, LET'S GO TO SLEEP.

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JOE...
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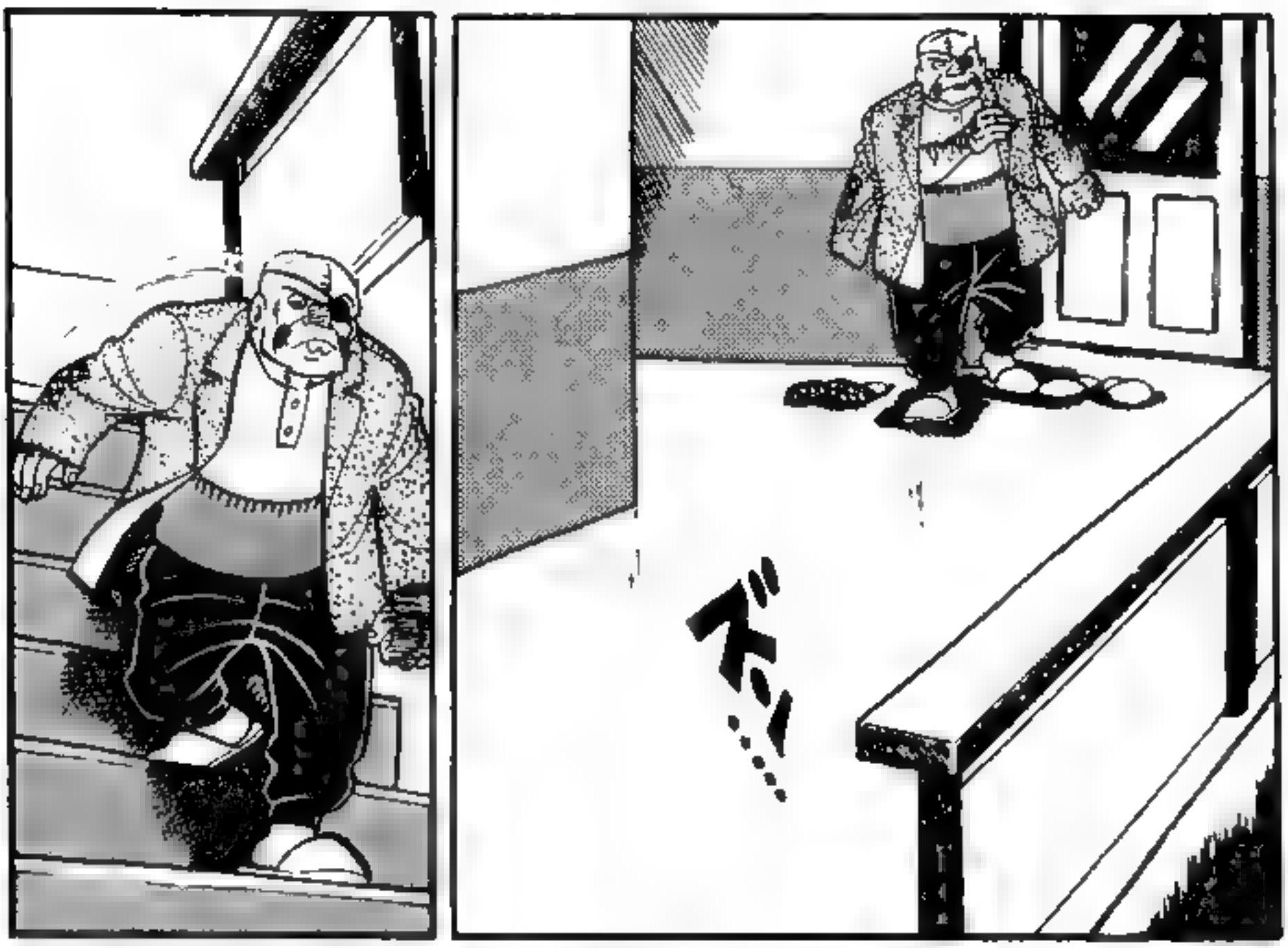
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SO GET UP THIS INSTANT!

YOUR SENIOR'S ALREADY DOWNSTAIRS TRAINING HARD!

HOW LONG ARE YA MAGGOTS PLANNING TO SLEEP FOR!?

MNN...

UH WHA?

OWW!

YOU AIN'T GOT TIME TO COMB YOUR HAIR, YOU DUMBASS!

WE'LL START BY RUNNING TO THE SHIRAHIGE BRIDGE SO GET DRESSED!

UMM... IT'S RAINING, COACH...

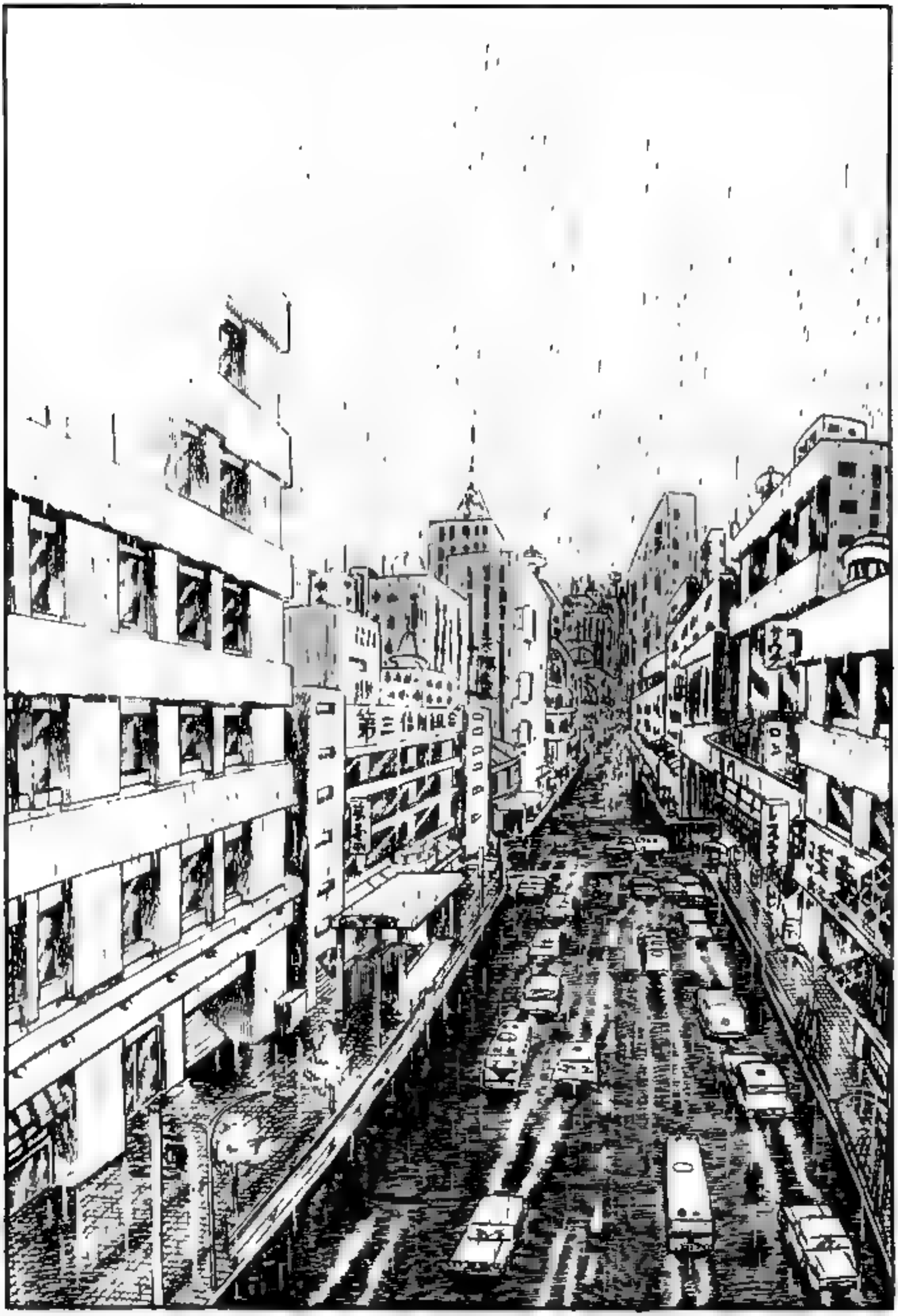
OH MAN, IT'S GONNA BE A CHILLY DAY TODAY.

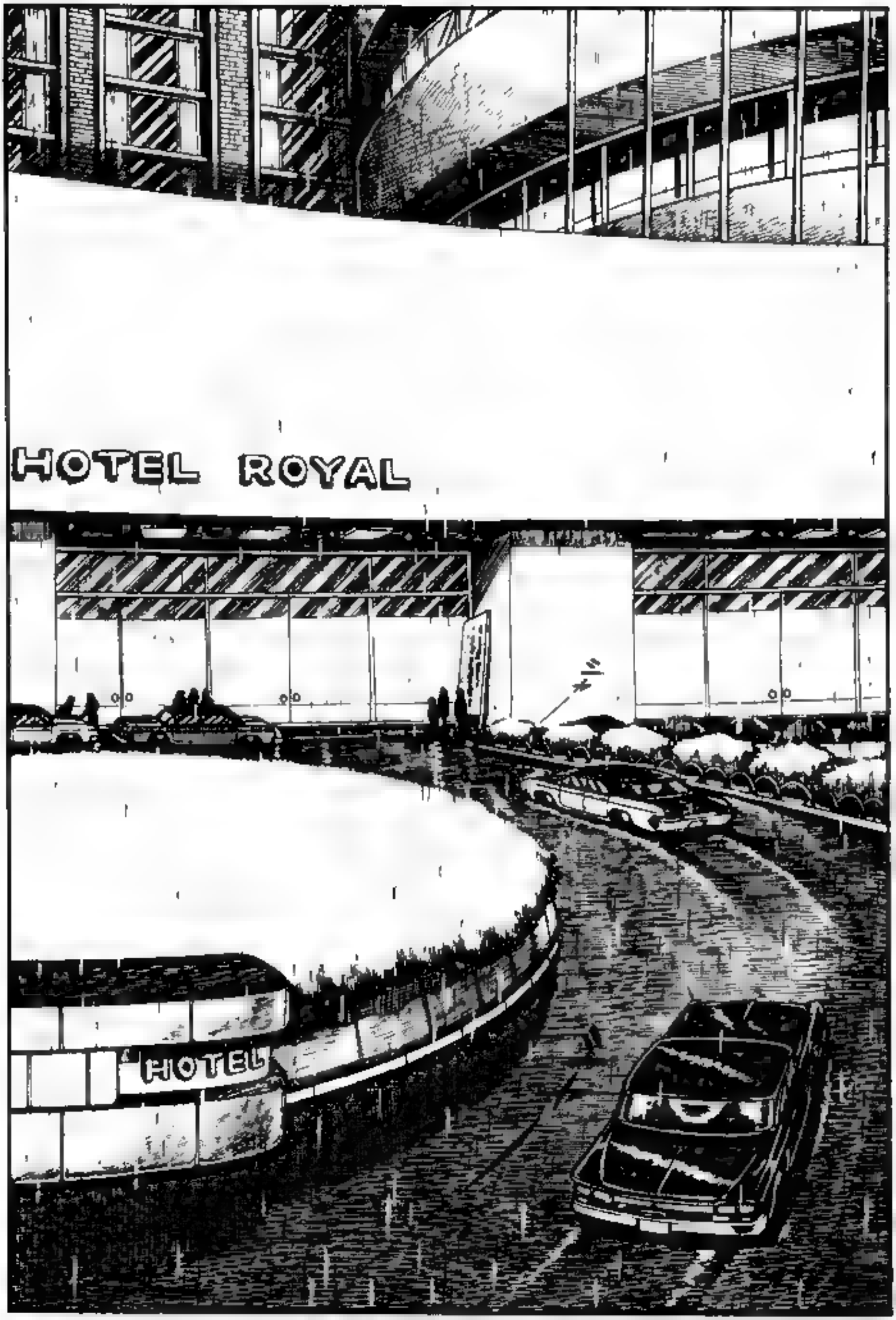
O-OKAY...

STOP WHINING JUST BECAUSE A FEW DROPS ARE FALLING FROM THE SKY!
ARE YOU A BUNCH OF BABIES!?

ONE, TWO! ONE, TWO!
TOGETHER NOW!

ONE, TWO!
ONE, TWO!
PUT SOME MORE SPIRIT INTO IT!

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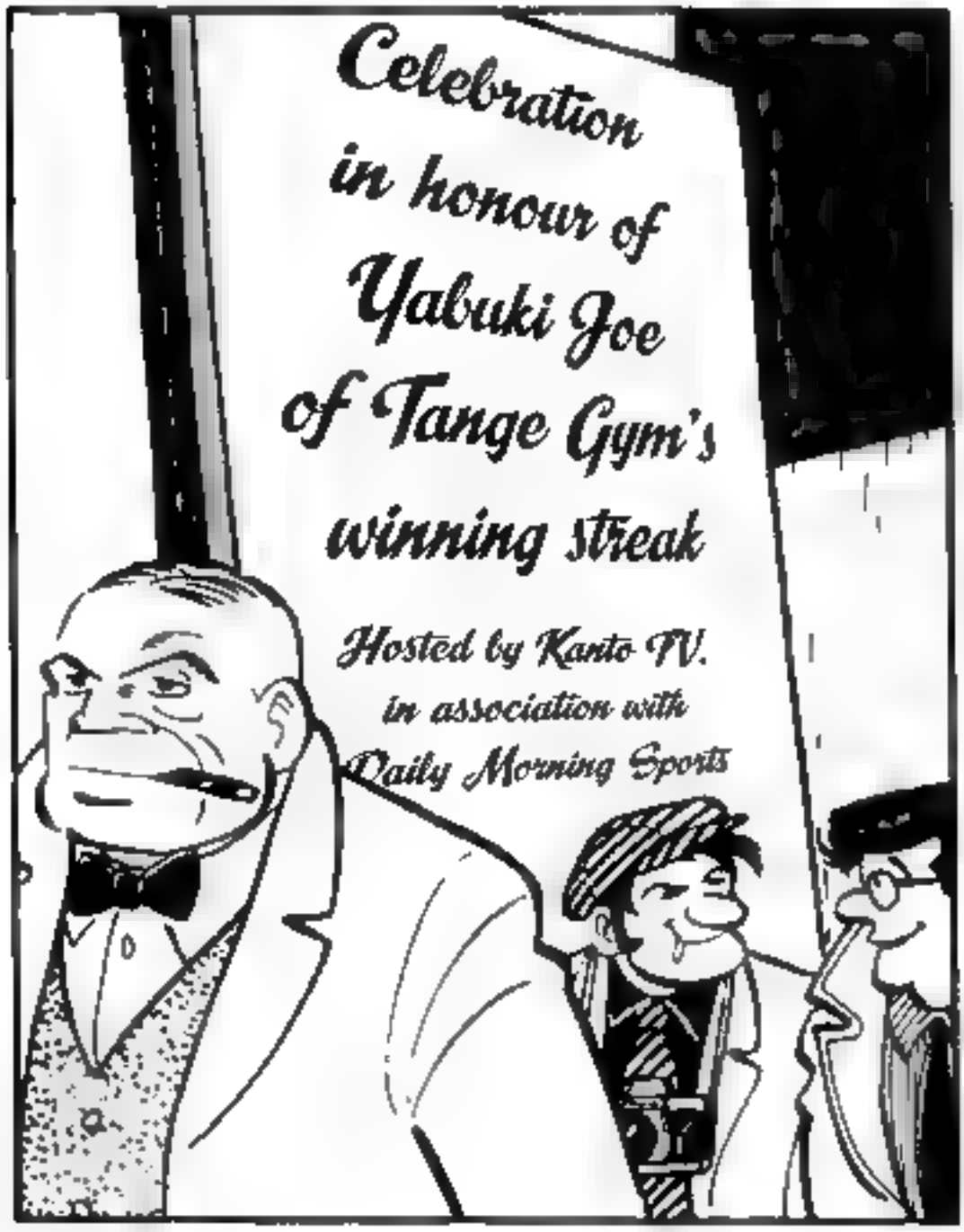
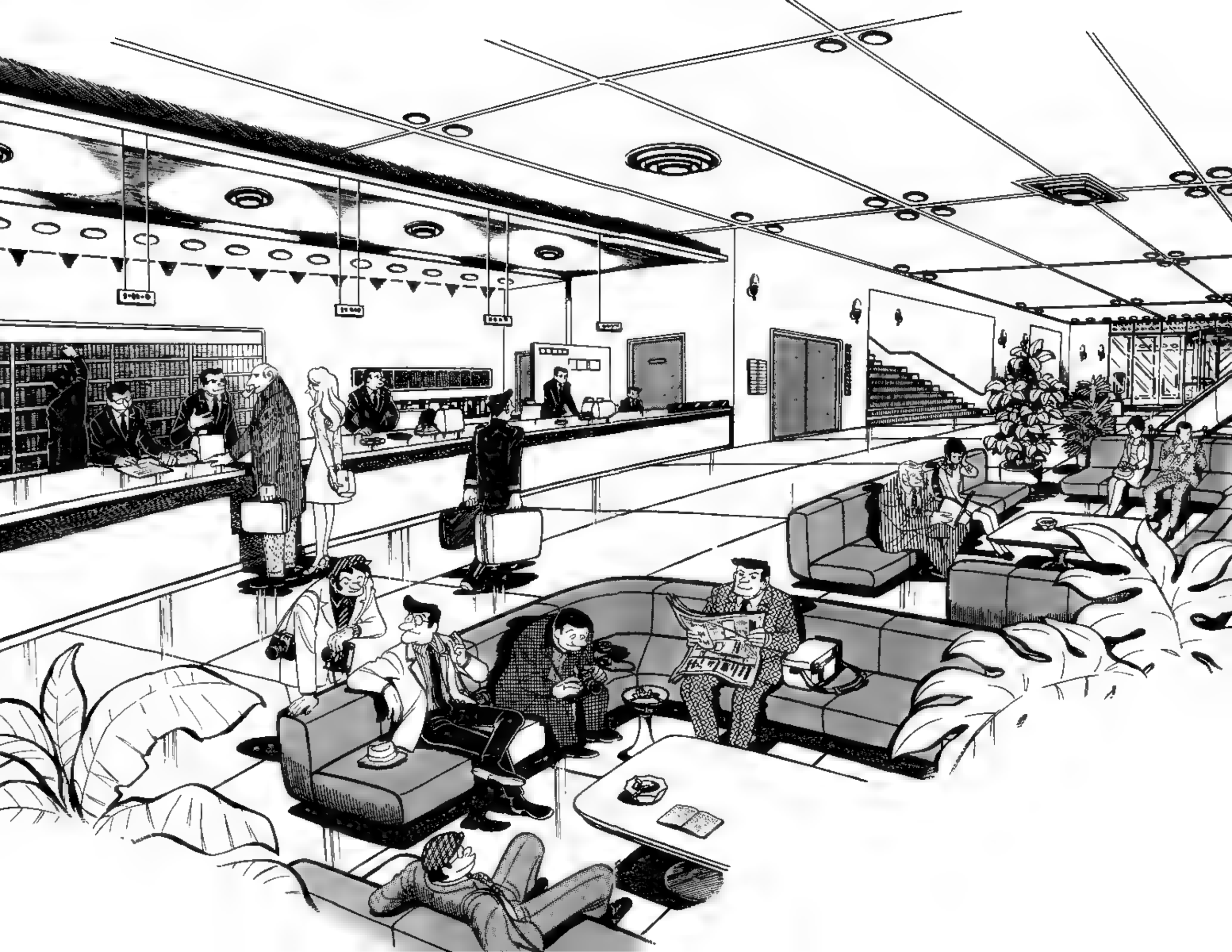

Celebration
in honour of
Yabuki Joe
of Tange Gym's
winning streak
Hosted by Kanto TV.
in association with
Daily Morning Sports



TO THINK THE NETWORK EXECS WOULD PUT ON A PARTY FOR HIS SAKE...

YOU SAID IT.

YABUKI JOE'S SURE GOTTEN BIG, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?

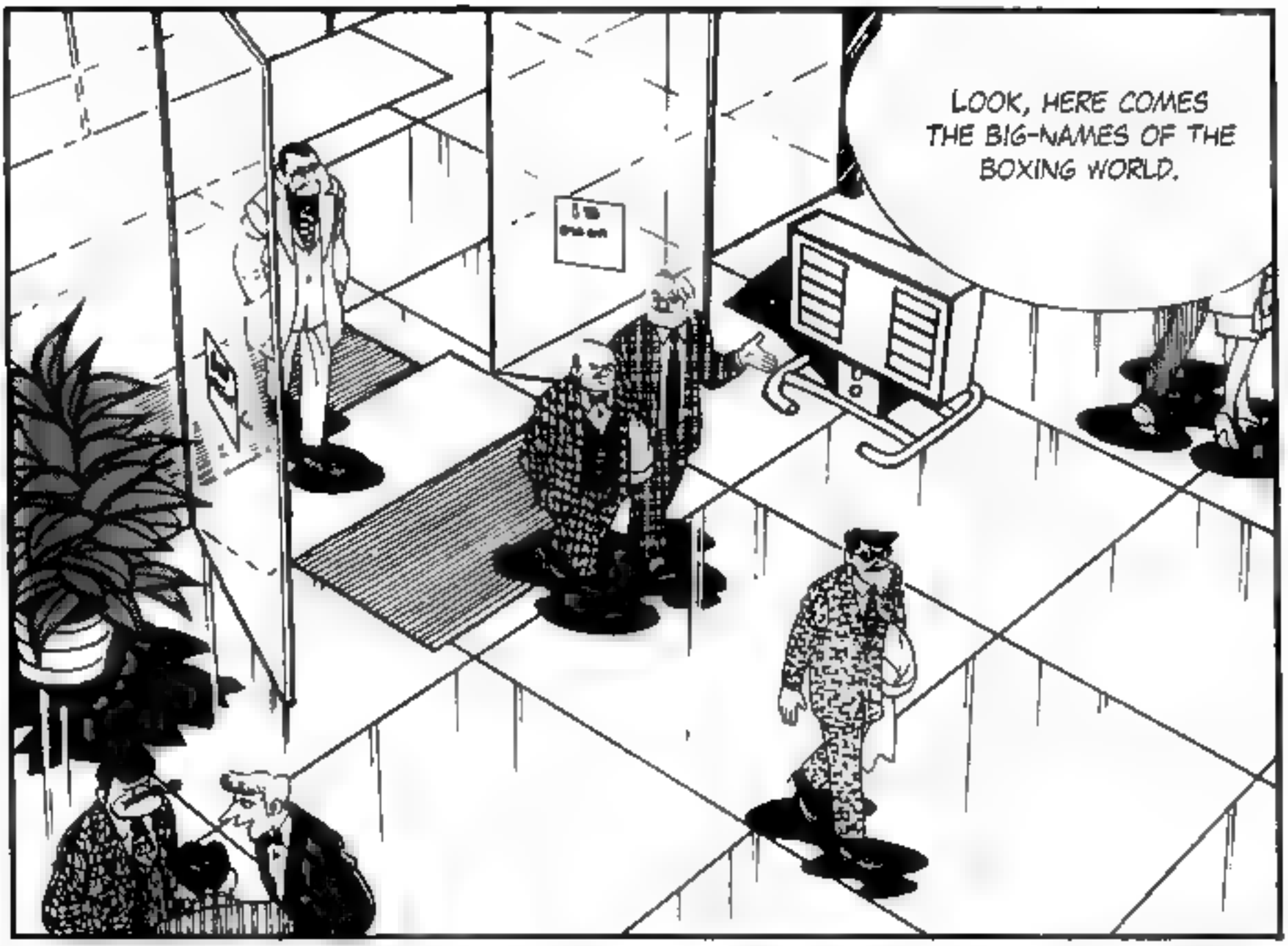
WELL, THAT JUST GOES TO SHOW YOU HOW INVALUABLE YABUKI IS TO BOTH THE BOXING WORLD AND TV BUSINESS IN JAPAN.

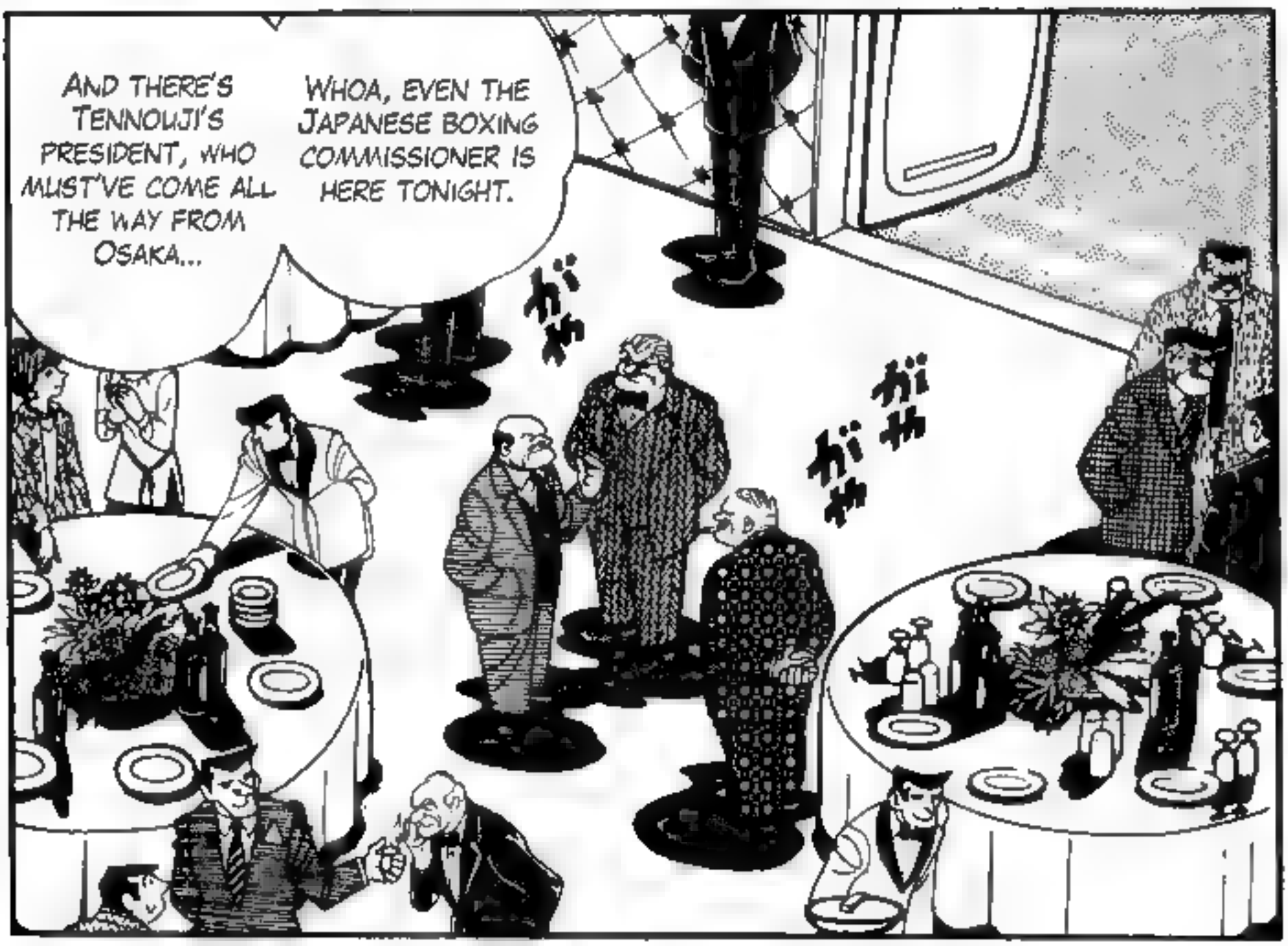
YES, CLEARLY KANTO TV HAS PROFIT IN MIND WHEN GOING OUT OF THEIR WAY TO HOST THIS PARTY

HM...

BUT ALL OF A SUDDEN, A STAR ARISES WHO CAN FILL ALL 37,000 SEATS IN THE KOURAKUEN BASEBALL STADIUM AND HIS NAME IS YABUKI JOE.

THESE DAYS, TV RATINGS FOR YOUR AVERAGE BOXING MATCH ARE FALLING DUE TO THE LACK OF POPULAR BOXERS.

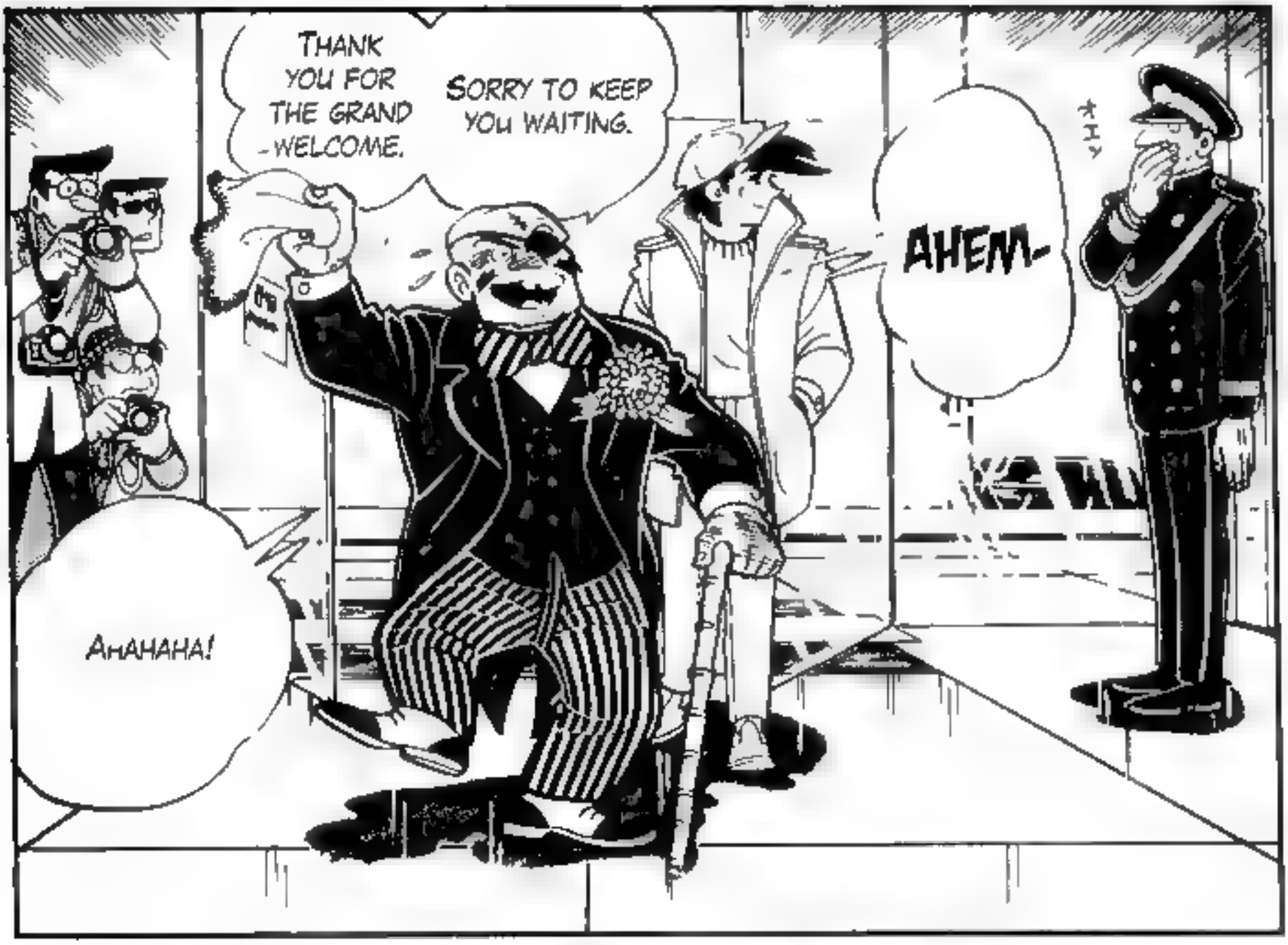

LOOK, HERE COMES THE BIG-NAMES OF THE BOXING WORLD.


AND THERE'S TENNOUJI'S PRESIDENT, WHO MUST'VE COME ALL THE WAY FROM OSAKA...
WHOA, EVEN THE JAPANESE BOXING COMMISSIONER IS HERE TONIGHT.
ガヤ
ガヤ
ガヤ

WEREN'T ALL THOSE MEN CONSPIRING TO DRIVE TANGE OUT OF THE BOXING WORLD JUST A WHILE BACK?
文(丹下ジム)
凡闘パーティ

BUT NOW HE'S ON TOP OF THE W-
THEY ALL THOUGHT HE WAS AN IDIOT WHO DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE HIS TIME HAD LONG PASSED BY.
YEAH,

SHOOT, THEY MUST HAVE ARRIVED!
LET'S GET TO WORK, BOYS!


THANK YOU FOR THE GRAND -WELCOME.
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING.
AHEM-
AHAHAHA!

W-WELL... THE MAIN STARS OF THIS EVENING'S PARTY HAVE ARRIVED!
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PLEASE GIVE A WARM HAND FOR YABUKI JOE AND TANGE DANPEI!

TALK ABOUT GARISH.
W-WHAT IS UP WITH THAT SUIT..?

T-THIS WAY SIR.
THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

Celebration in honour of Yabuki Joe of Tange Gym's winning streak

Hosted by Kanto TV. in association with Daily Morning Sports

THERE'S NO CHANGING A FOOL BEHIND THE TIMES...

AHAHAHAHA!

T-THANK YOU SO MUCH, REALLY...

NEXT, I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO DIRECTOR OOHASHI, HEAD OF THE KANTO TV'S SPORTS PROGRAMMING!
PLEASE GIVE HIM A WARM HAND AS WELL!
Kanto TV, in ass
THANK YOU FOR THE WELCOME.
AHEM.
PRESIDENT TANGE AND YABUKI JOE!

NOT ONLY HAVE YOU CONTINUED TO WIN, BUT EVERY FIGHT, YOU'VE SHOWN AN EXCITING KO FINISH. FOR THAT, I GIVE YOU MY HIGHEST HEARTFELT PRAISE!

I'D FIRST LIKE TO CONGRATULATE YOUR CURRENT WINNING STREAK THAT HAS SPANNED THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS.

Hosted by Kanto TV, in association

NOW LET ME MAKE OUR COMPANY'S INTENTIONS CLEAR.

AND HOST THIS BANQUET IN THEIR HONOUR!

ON BEHALF OF KANTO TV, I WELCOME THE GOLDEN COMBINATION OF YABUKI AND TANGE,

THAT IS WHY WE HOLD THIS BANQUET TONIGHT!

AND HAVE EXCLUSIVE COVERAGE FOR ALL OF YABUKI'S MATCHES!

IT IS KANTO TV'S DEEPEST DESIRE TO CONTINUE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS GOLDEN COMBINATION,

IMPRES-SIVE!

HONEST AS EVER, KANTO!

YES, WE DID TALK ABOUT IT.

UMM... WELL...

AH-

SOMETHING YOU AND HE DISCUSSED PREVIOUSLY?

OLD MAN... IS WHAT THAT GUY BLATHERING ON ABOUT OVER THERE,

EVEN THE TV STATION ITSELF IS GIVING YOU THEIR FULL SUPPORT!

Y-YOU SHOULD CONSIDER THIS A GREAT HONOUR, JOE.

HM...

YES, GOLDEN INDEED.

DID YA HEAR HIM CALL US A GOLDEN COMBINA-TION!?

AND, UHH... HEH HEH.

WE'RE ALL HOPING SOME OF YOUR LUCK CAN RUB OFF TO US AS WELL.

HAHA... THE REST OF US COULDN'T BE ANY MORE JEALOUS.

EVENING, GENTLEMEN

A-AHH,

WOOPS.

THE GUY'S SPEECH IS STILL GOING ON.

WAIT,

L-LET ME POUR YOU A DR-

SO IT'D BE BEST TO QUICKLY LEARN THE MOST BASIC MANNERS AT LEAST, HAHA..

YOU'LL SOON BE ATTENDING MANY BANQUETS SUCH AS TONIGHT'S,

RIGHT...

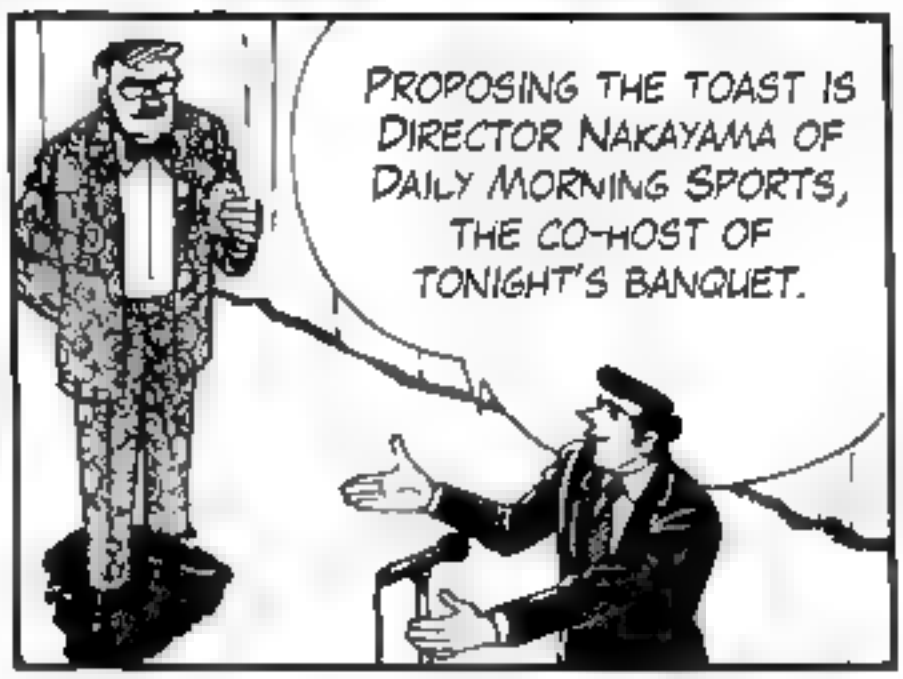
THEN, UHH... WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO DRINK YET, RIGHT?

NO. IT'S PROPER ETIQUETTE AT BANQUETS SUCH AS THESE TO WAIT UNTIL THE HOST'S WELCOME SPEECH IS OVER AND SOMEONE PROPOSES A TOAST.

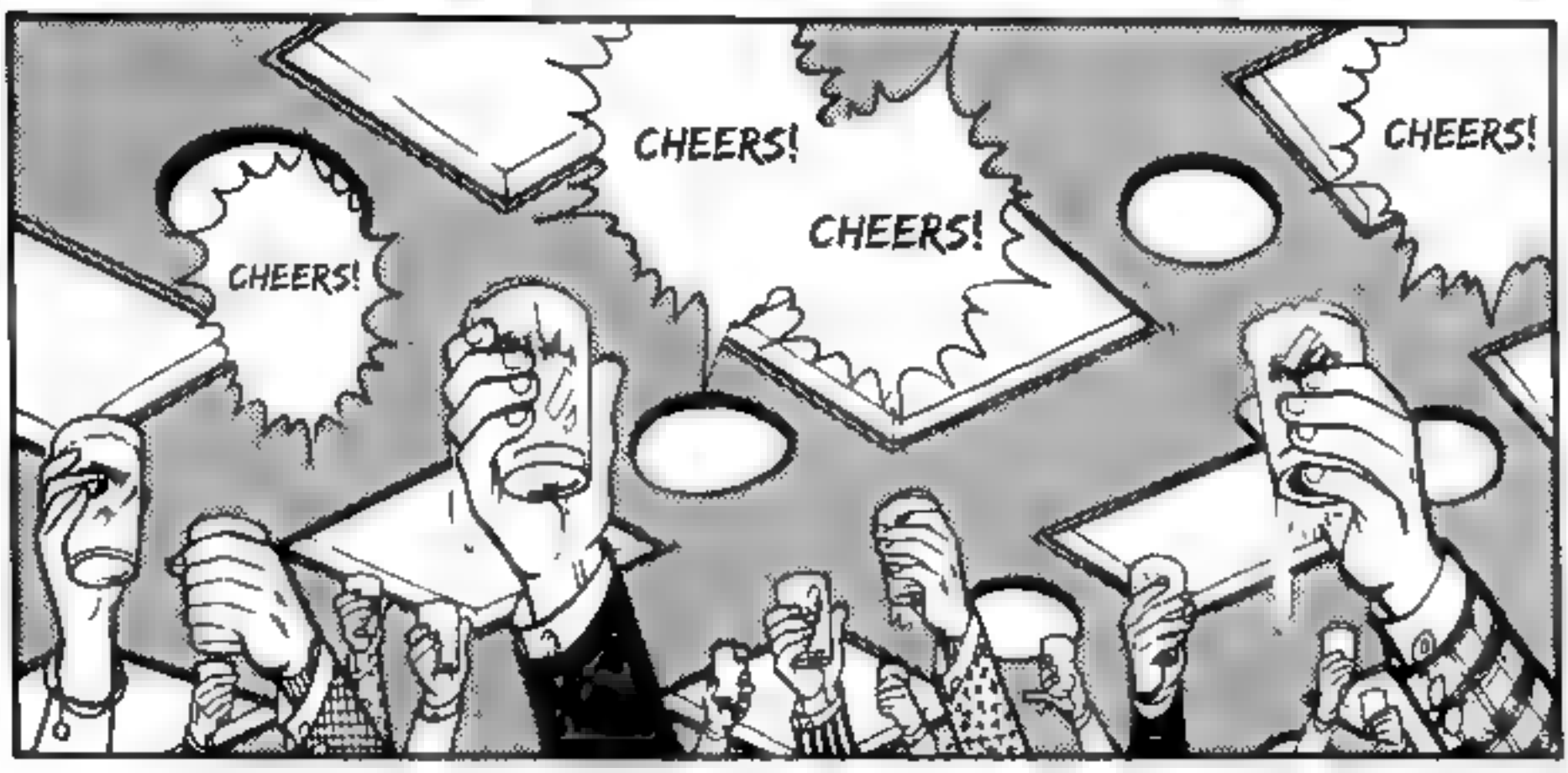
A-
Ahem.
Right.
What happened to all your spunk back when you started up a gym below that bridge of tears as an outcast of the boxing world?
Stop actin' so nervously. It's hard to watch.
Stick your chest out with confidence.
Good.
First up is to arrange the Pacific title-match! And I promise you it won't be long before even a shot at the world title is possible!
Of course, we in turn will do our very best in providing Yabuki with the very best opportunities!

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IT IS TIME FOR THE TOAST.
AHEM.

LET US PROPOSE A TOAST TO THE SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN YABUKI AND KANTO TV AND THEIR FUTURE SUCCESS. .
AHEM.


PROPOSING THE TOAST IS DIRECTOR NAKAYAMA OF DAILY MORNING SPORTS, THE CO-HOST OF TONIGHT'S BANQUET.

CHEERS!


CHEERS!
CHEERS!
CHEERS!
CHEERS!

CONGRATULATIONS, DANPEI. YOU'VE HIT THE BIG TIME NOW. THINGS ARE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WHEN A TV STATION'S GOT YOUR BACK.

FUNDS, FIGHT NEGOTIATIONS, EVERYTHING. THEY'LL TAKE CARE OF IT!

FOR THEM, YOU AND YABUKI ARE LIKE THE GOOSE THAT LAYS GOLDEN EGGS!

I DID BEAR SOME RESENTMENT TOWARDS YOU IN THE PAST FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO WOLF KANAGUSHI, BUT... LET'S PUT THAT ALL BEHIND US AND START OUR RELATIONSHIP ANEW, HAHA!

SO YOU CAME TOO?

OH HEY

GOOD EVE-NING, YABUKI.

IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT I'D GET AN INVITATION.

WELL, I AM STILL THE PRESIDENT OF SHIRAKI GYM.

AREN'T I HONOURED?

WELL, WELL.

I NORMALLY DON'T ATTEND THESE TYPES OF GET-TOGETHERS BETWEEN GYM OWNERS, BUT I MADE AN EXCEPTION FOR YOUR CASE.

'CAUSE Y'SEE, I WANTED TO SHOW THROUGH JOE THAT BOXING AIN'T ALL ABOUT SCIENCE OR SOUND LOGIC-

FROM THE VERY FIRST MOMENT, I PREDICTED THAT HE'D EVENTUALLY LEAD US TO A NIGHT LIKE TONIGHT'S!

AHAHAHA! Y'KNOW, I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I MET JOE JUS' LIKE IT WAS YESTERDAY!

HIC!

OH, ARE YOU NOT DRINKING?

MR. TANGE IS SURE IN A GOOD MOOD, ISN'T HE?

I'M NOT IN THE MOOD RIGHT NOW.

NO.

NAH, I'M FINE.

SO YOU NEEDN'T WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT STAYING WITHIN THE WEIGHT LIMIT

AFTER ALL, YOU'RE AT AN IDEAL WEIGHT FOR A BANTAMWEIGHT,

EVEN IF ALCOHOL'S NO GOOD, I'M SURE YOU CAN TRY SOME OF THESE DISHES.

JUST LEAVE ME BE...

I DON'T WANT ANYTHING RIGHT NOW.

SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR FACE SEEMS... A LITTLE BIGGER OR STURDIER? OR SHOULD I SAY MATURED?

NO, THAT'S NOT QUITE IT.

YABUKI, HAVE YOU... PUT ON SOME WEIGHT?

...

JUST YOUR IMAGINA-TION.

HE'S BEEN STARING AT ME FOR SOME TIME NOW...

THAT MAN OVER BY THE POST.

HM? WHOM DO YOU MEAN?

WHO'S THAT GUY OVER THERE?

MORE IMPOR-TANTLY,

WHAT?
H-HEY!

YEAH, I GET THE SAME FEELING...
I'M... NOT SURE, BUT I FEEL AS IF I'VE SEEN HIM FROM SOMEWHERE...

WHAT!?
OR IS THAT GUY OVER THERE JOSÉ MENDOZA?
IS IT JUST ME,

JOSÉ!?

Y-YOU'RE RIGHT!
IT'S JOSÉ MENDOZA!

W-WHAT'S THE WORLD CHAMPION DOING HERE!?
THAT'S DEFINITELY JOSÉ MENDOZA, THE WORLD CHAMPION WHO BEAT CARLOS RIVERA...

OR AT LEAST, I HAVEN'T HEARD OF ANY SUCH INVITATION BEING SENT OUT.
NO...
W-W-WAS IT KANTO TV WHO INVITED HIM?
D-DIRECTOR OOHASHI...

AND EVEN IF WE OR KANTO TV DID INVITE HIM, IT'S ABSURD TO THINK THE WORLD CHAMPION WOULD FLY ALL THE WAY OVER TO JAPAN AND ATTEND A BANQUET FOR A JAPANESE BOXER...

THEN... WAS IT YOUR DAILY MORNING SPORTS?

NO, IT WASN'T US EITHER.

...THEN IT MUST BE YOUR DOING, RIGHT?

YOU'VE ALREADY REGAINED YOUR FORM. WHAT NEED IS THERE FOR ME TO STAGE SOMETHING SO ELABORATE AGAIN?

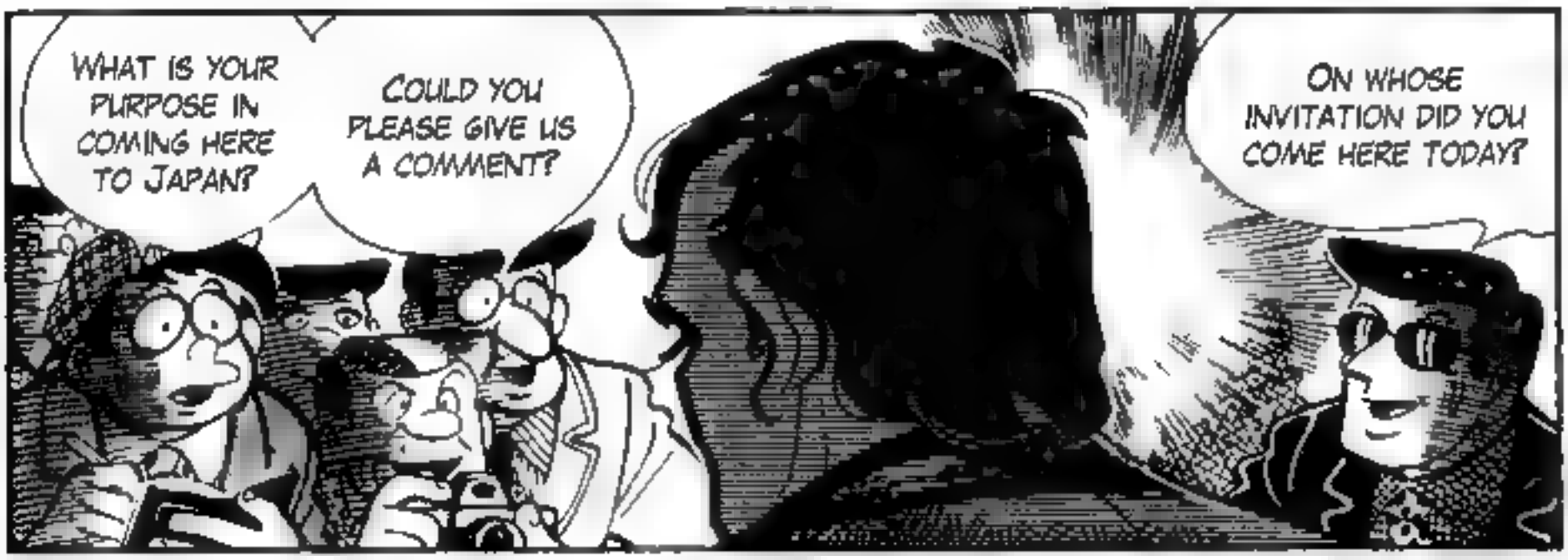
AND WHY WOULD I DO THAT?

JUST AS YOU INVITED RIVERA ALL THE WAY OVER FROM VENEZUELA, YOU'VE CONVINCED MENDOZA TO COME OVER WITH SOME FAT STACKS OF CASH, I BET.

WHATEVER DO YOU MEAN?

THIS IS FRONT-PAGE MATERIAL!
THE FACT REMAINS THIS IS A BIG SCOOP.
WELL... WHATEVER THE REASON,

MAY I ASK WHY YOU'VE SUDDENLY DECIDED TO DROP BY HERE AT THIS BANQUET?
E-EXCUSE ME, SIR. YOU ARE JOSÉ MENDOZA, THE WORLD CHAMPION, CORRECT?
IT COULDN'T BE THAT YOU'VE COME HERE TO ARRANGE A MATCH BETWEEN YOU AND YABUKI NOW, COULD IT...?


WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE IN COMING HERE TO JAPAN?
COULD YOU PLEASE GIVE US A COMMENT?
ON WHOSE INVITATION DID YOU COME HERE TODAY?

ざわ…

WE NEED AN INTER-PRETER!
ISN'T THERE ANYONE WHO CAN TALK TO HIM?
OH DEAR.

ぬっ

WHOA—
ズイッ
AHHH—

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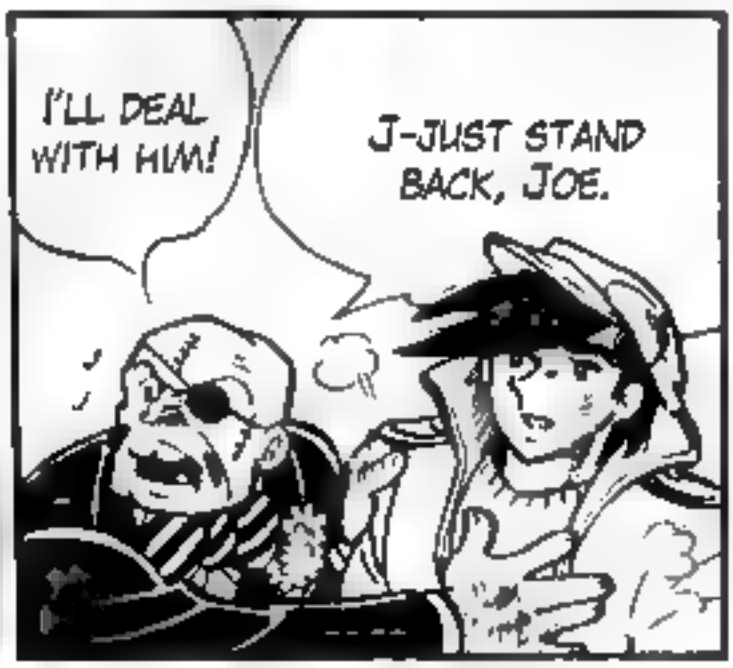
THE WORLD CHAMP'S WALKING OVER TO JOE...

AHHH!

W-W-WAIT...

Hey Mister José Mendoza!


I'LL DEAL WITH HIM!
J-JUST STAND BACK, JOE.

OH FOR GOD'S SAKE...
Cross counter and knockout arigato gozaimasu!
Fight upper everybody come here come back to me!

WHAT... YOU GOT BUSINESS WITH ME?

STAND ASIDE, OLD MAN.

HAHA...

GOOD LUCK...

WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?
HE'S LEAVING JUST LIKE THAT?
W-WHAT?

COULD YOU PLEASE GIVE US AN ANSWER WHY YOU'VE COME TO JAPAN?
M-M-MR. MENDOZA!

がやがや
MR. MENDOZA? HELLO?
DID YOU MAKE A PROMISE TO FIGHT WITH YABUKI?

DON'T JUST STAND THERE, CONTINUE ON WITH THE SPEECHES!

MC!

I... DON'T HAVE THE FAINTEST IDEA.

WHAT WAS... THAT ALL ABOUT?

矢吹大（丹下ジム）
連戦連勝祝賀パーティー
主催テレビ関東 後援 朝日スポーツ新聞社

AH, MY APOLOGIES. THE SUDDEN VISIT BY THE WORLD CHAMPION MADE ME FORGET MOMENTARILY.

NOW THEN, LET US CONTINUE THE CEREMONY BY HAVING A WORD FOR YABUKI AND PRESIDENT TANGE FROM TONIGHT'S GUESTS.

パチ パチ パチ パチ パチ パチ パチ

FIRST UP IS JAPAN'S BOXING COMMISSIONER—

WHY...

THE SUDDEN VISIT SEEMS TO HAVE PUT A DAMPER ON THE PARTY.

YABUKI,

WHAT SAY WE SKIP OUT ON THIS BANQUET AND GO HAVE DINNER?

WHY...

WHY DID HE COME HERE...?

JUST LEAVE THE PARTY HERE TO TANGE.

WELL?

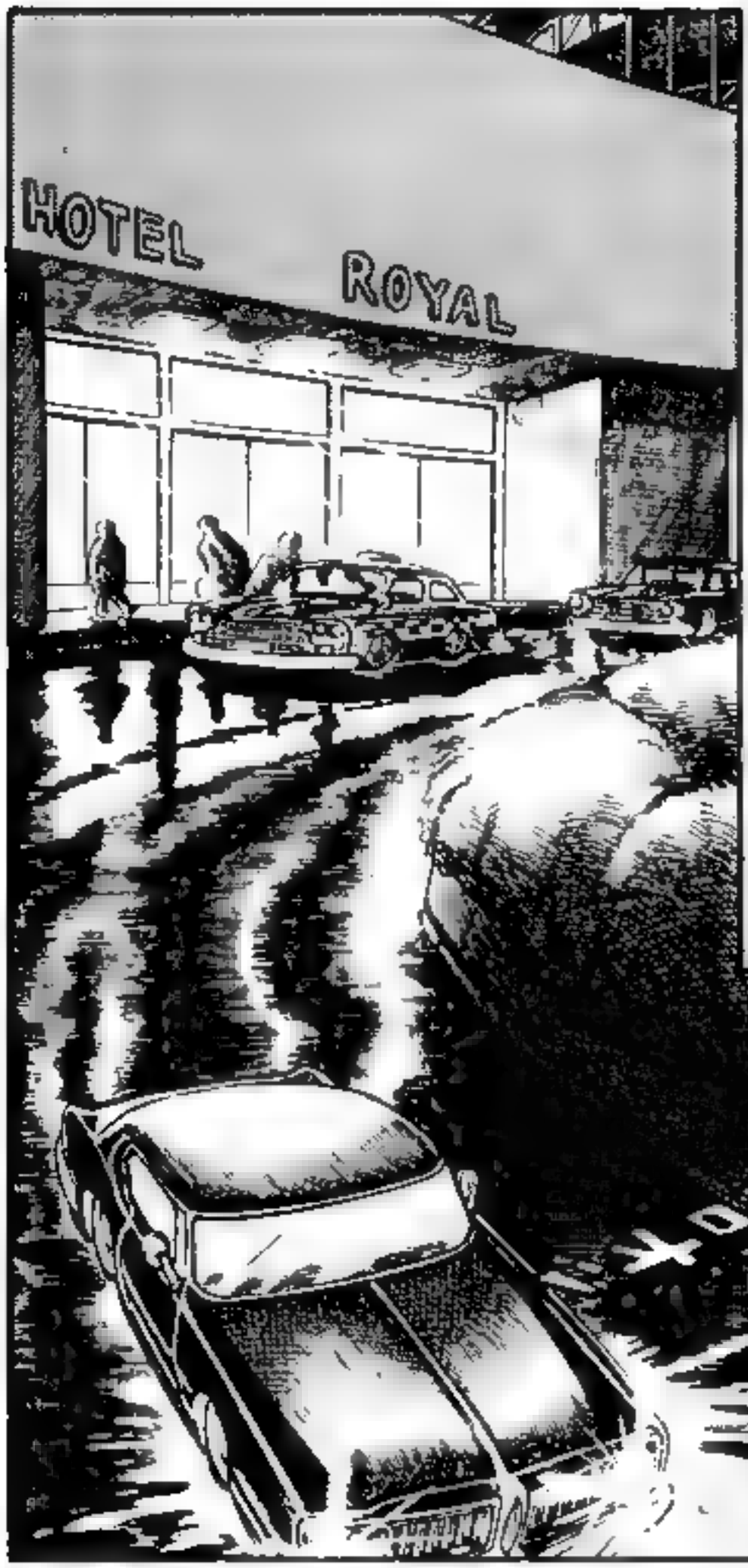
THEN HOW ABOUT DANCING?

I'M NOT HUNGRY.

I'M NOT REALLY INTO ANY OF THAT STUFF.

THERE'S A NEW HOT BAND PLAYING THERE RECENTLY.

REMEMBER THAT CLUB BALLON WHERE WE ONCE COINCIDENTALLY CROSSED EACH OTHER?


HOTEL
ROYAL

WELL IN ANY CASE, LET'S JUST GET OUT OF HERE. WE CAN THINK ABOUT WHAT TO DO IN THE CAR.
HURRY UP THEN.

THE RAIN SEEMS TO HAVE STOPPED.

SO WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO?

WELL WHATEVER.

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

IT AIN'T LIKE YOU TO DRAG PEOPLE OUT SUDDENLY LIKE THIS.

SO WHAT'S THE DEAL?

HOW ABOUT A NICE STEAK DINNER AT A NICE RESTAURANT WITH A SKY LOUNGE SO WE CAN ENJOY THE VIEW WHILE WE EAT?

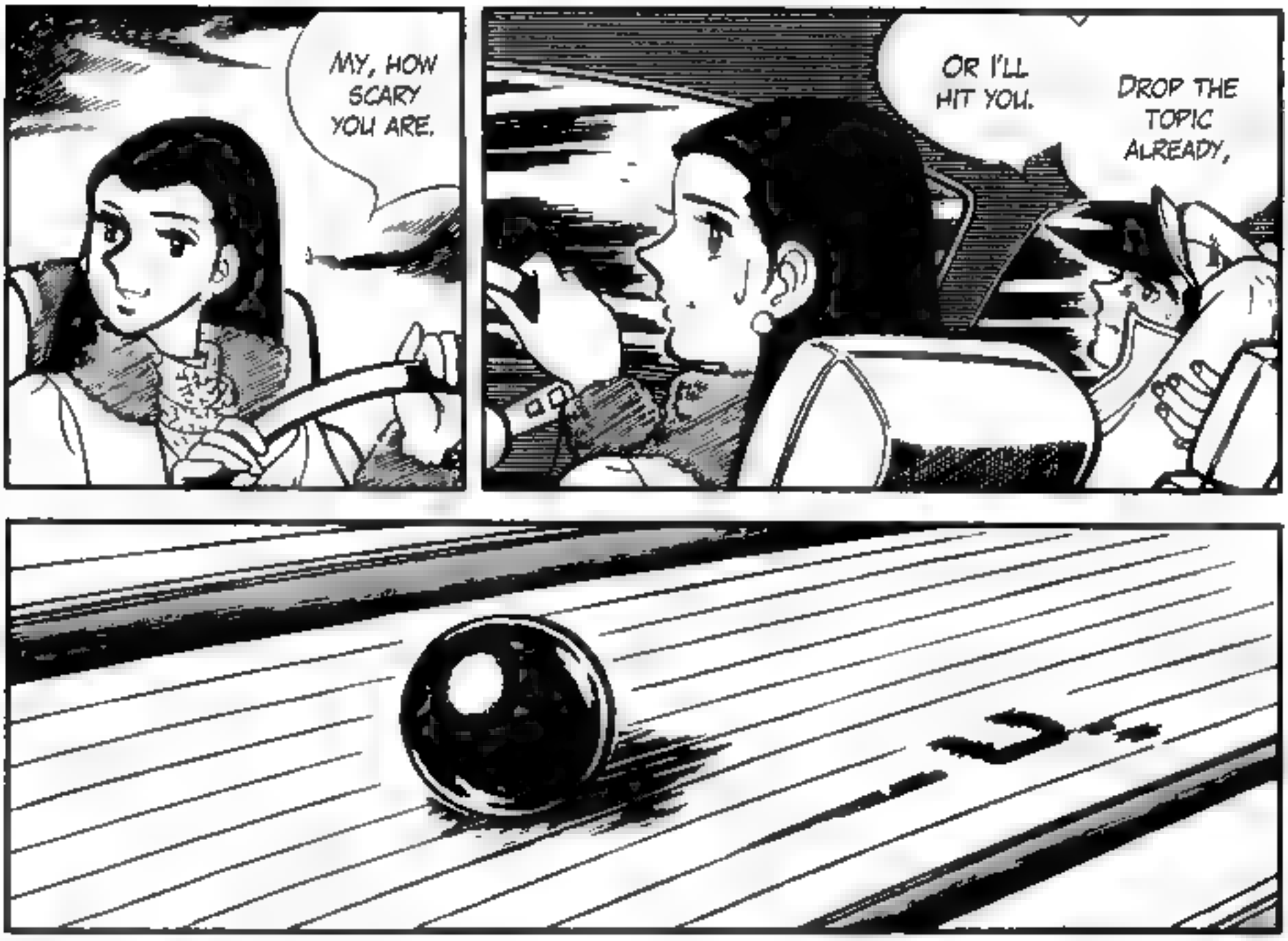
YOU MUST BE FAMISHED.

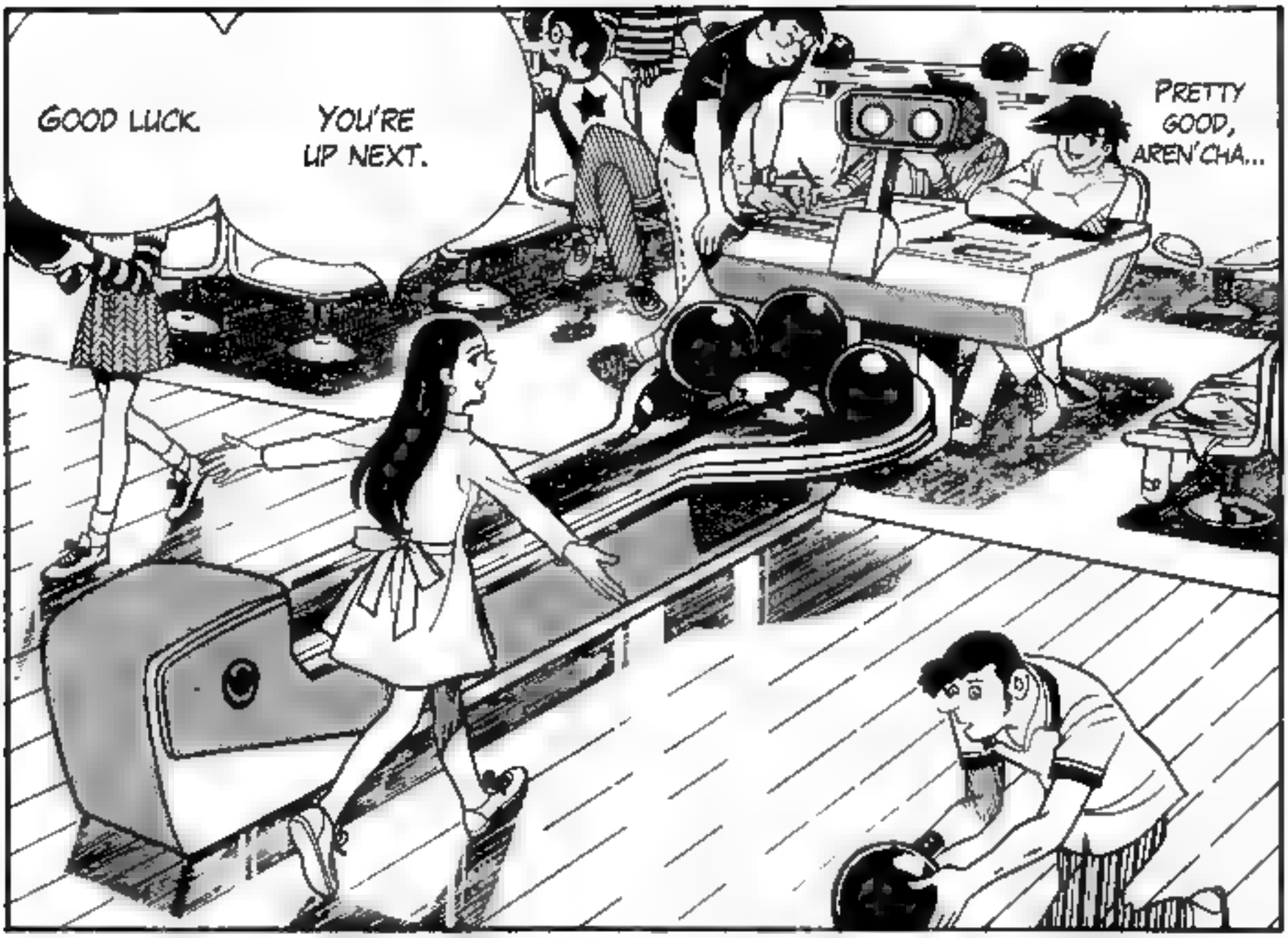
YOU DIDN'T EVEN HAVE A BITE OF ANYTHING AT THE BANQUET

SINCE WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN BATTLING WITH YOUR WEIGHT?

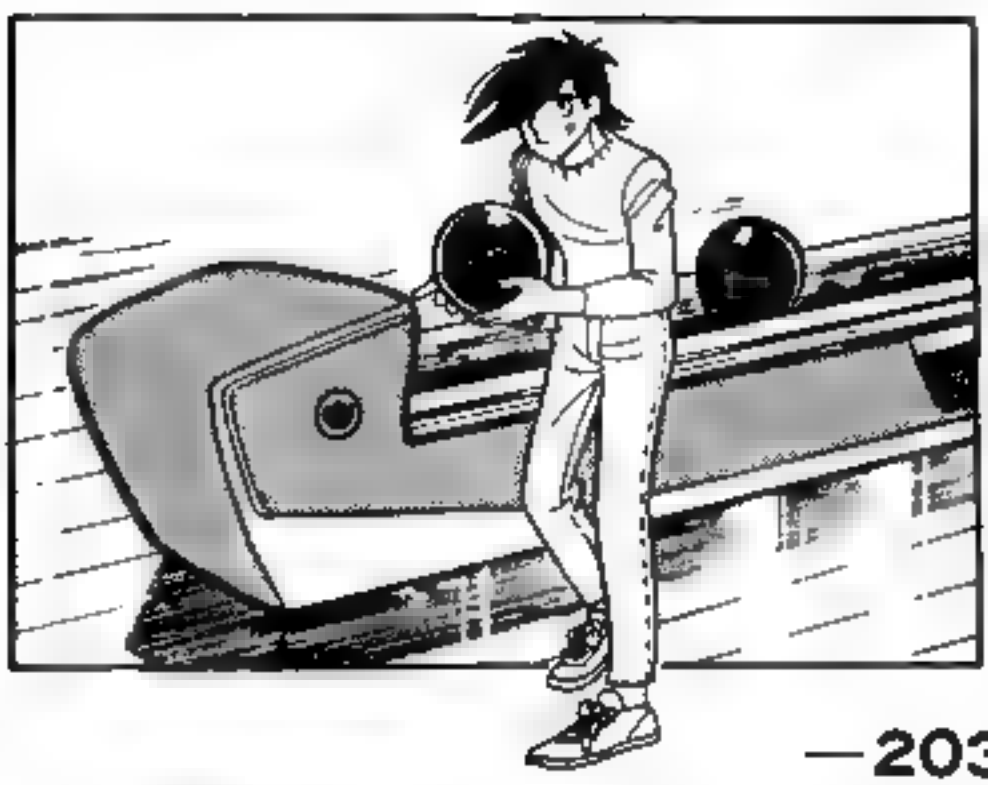
YOU'RE HAVING A HARD TIME, AREN'T YOU?

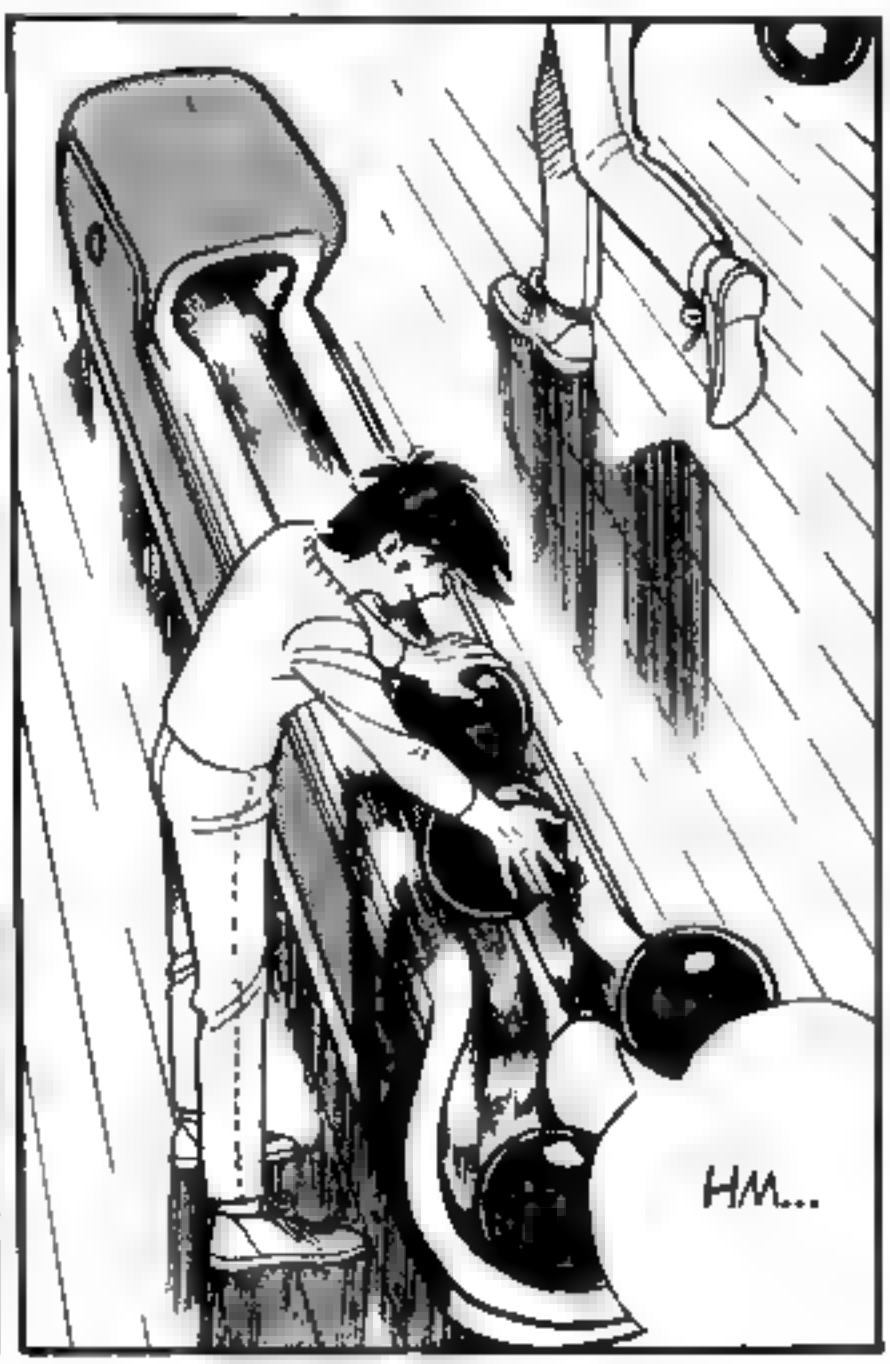
HOW MANY TIMES DO I GOTTA REPEAT MYSELF? I AIN'T HUNGRY..


MY, HOW SCARY YOU ARE.
OR I'LL HIT YOU.
DROP THE TOPIC ALREADY,

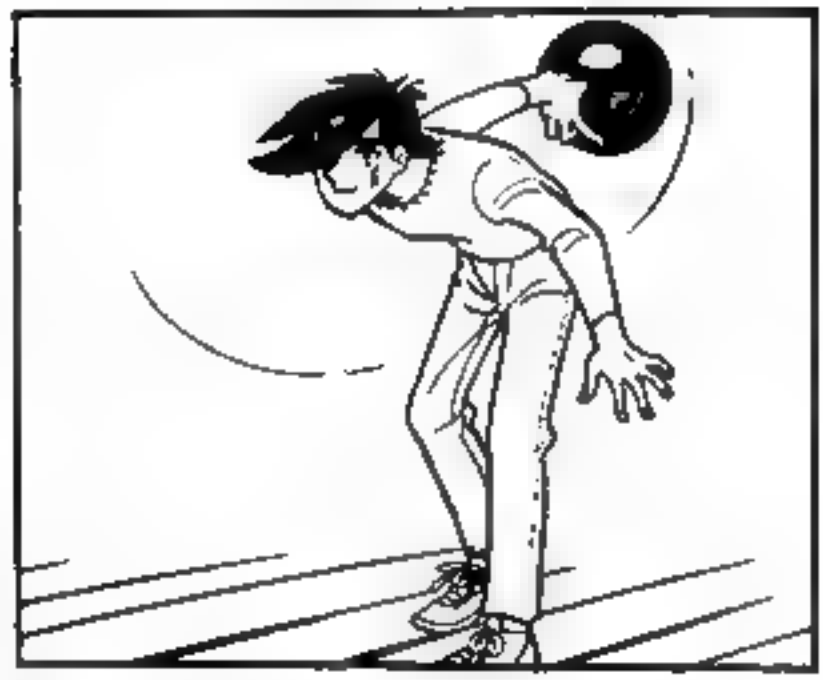

GOOD LUCK.
YOU'RE UP NEXT.
PRETTY GOOD, AREN'CHA...

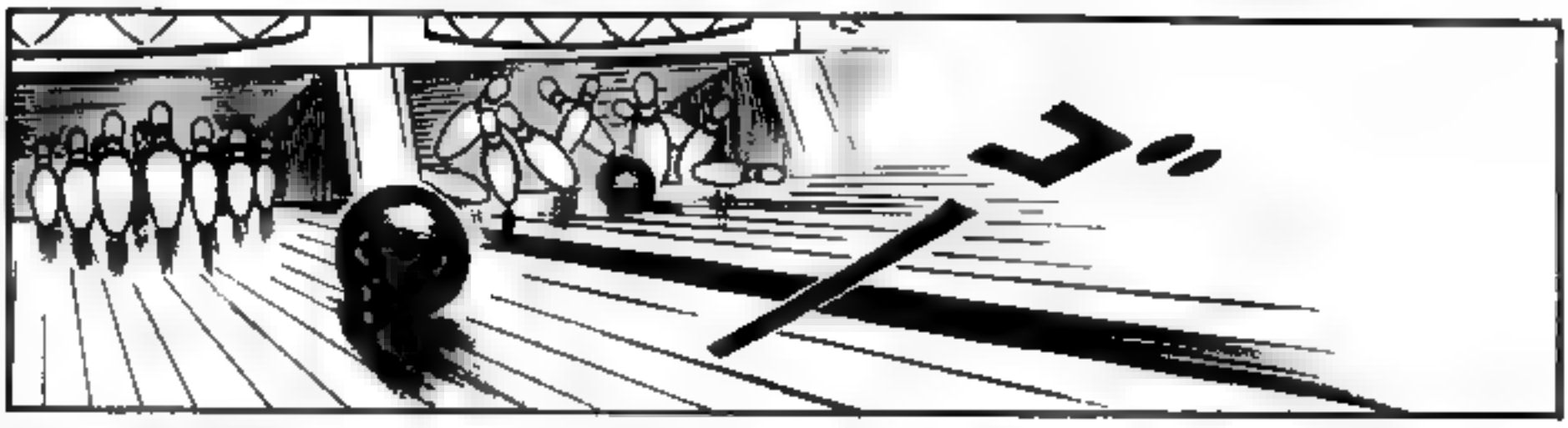
YOU'RE SO ABSENT-MINDED, YABUKI.
THIS IS THE BALL YOU'VE BEEN USING.




HM...

HERE I GO.
ゴ…

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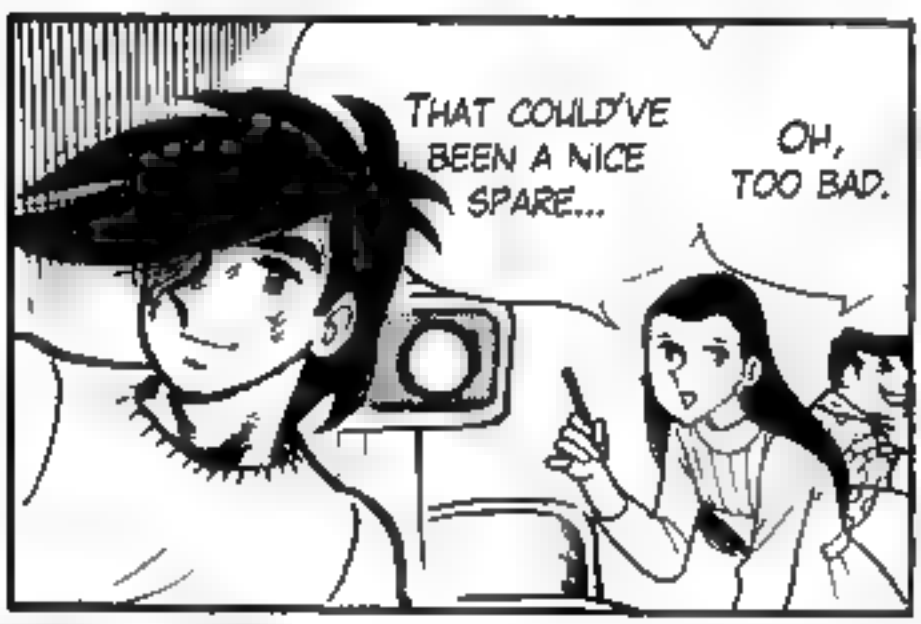
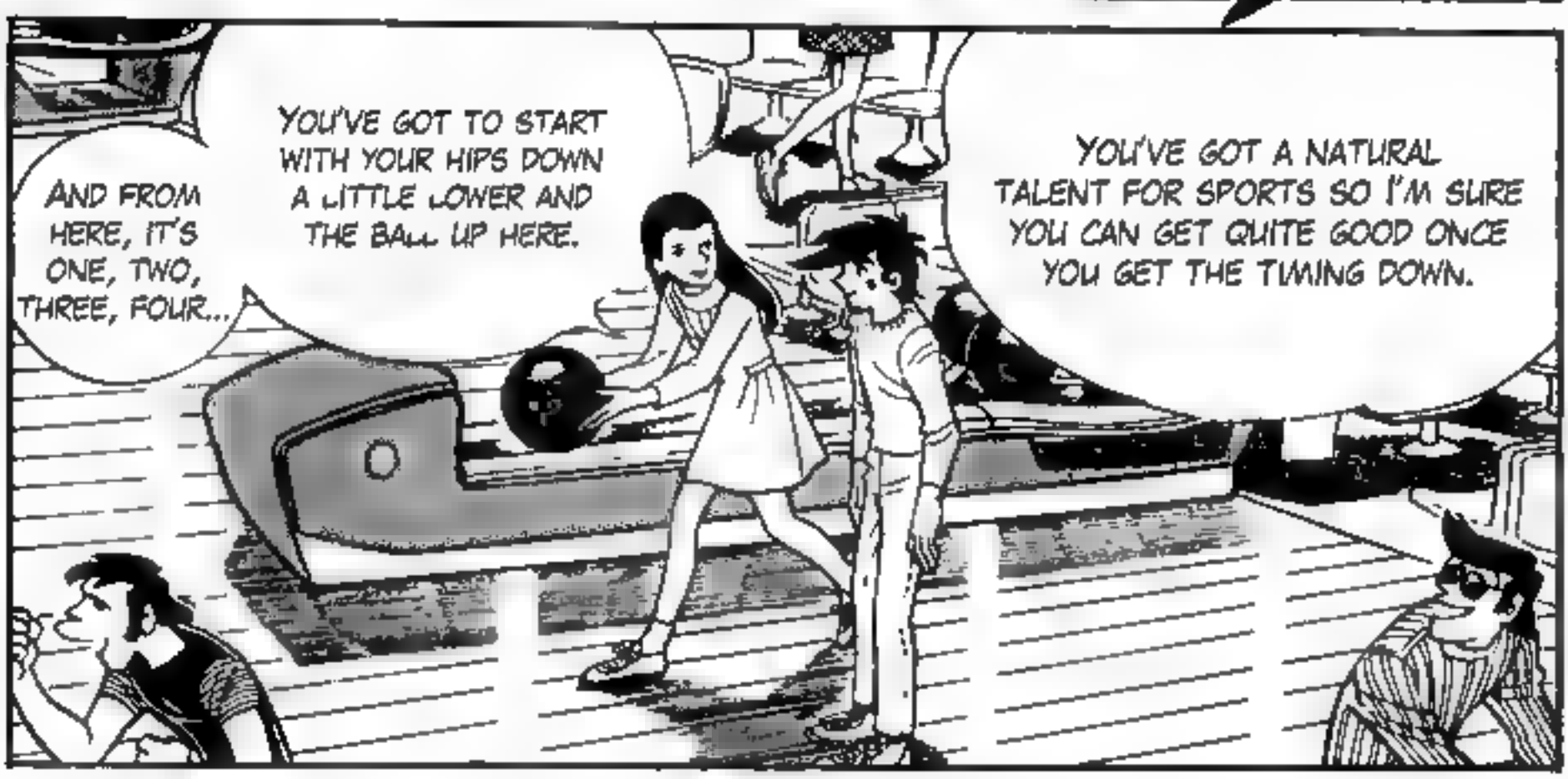
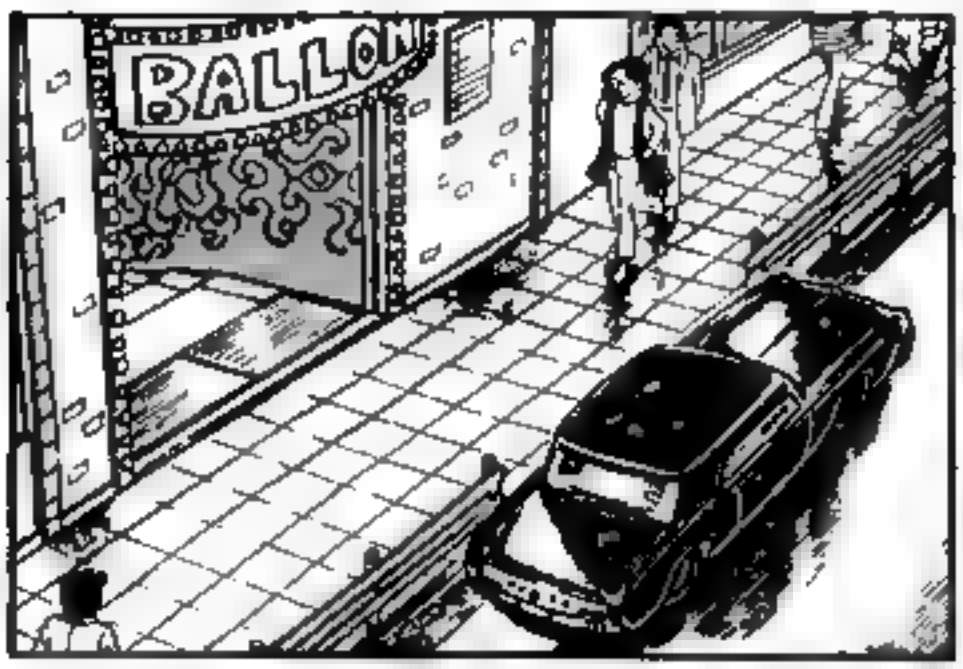
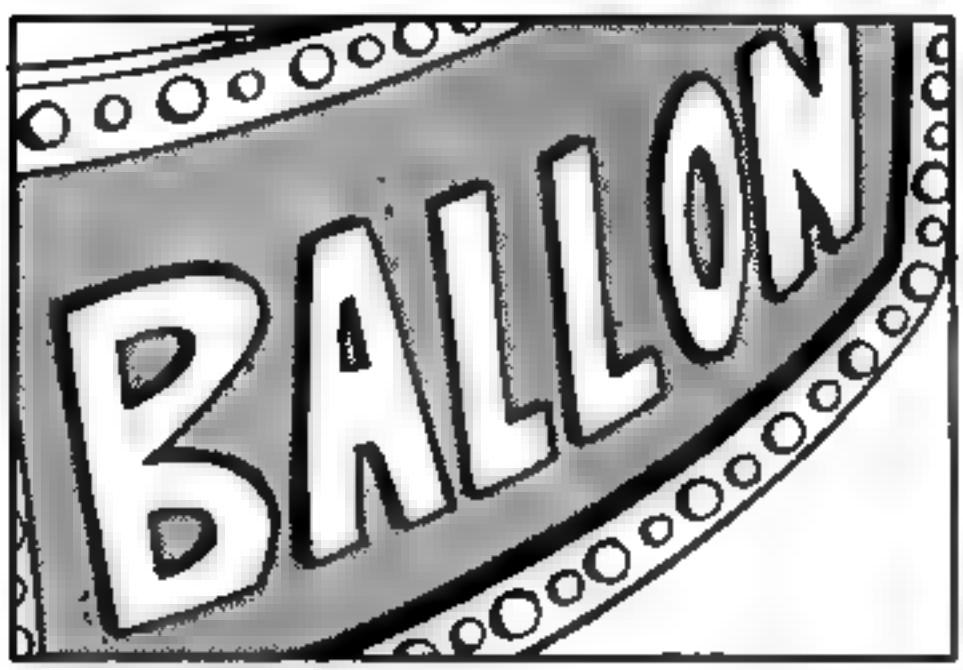
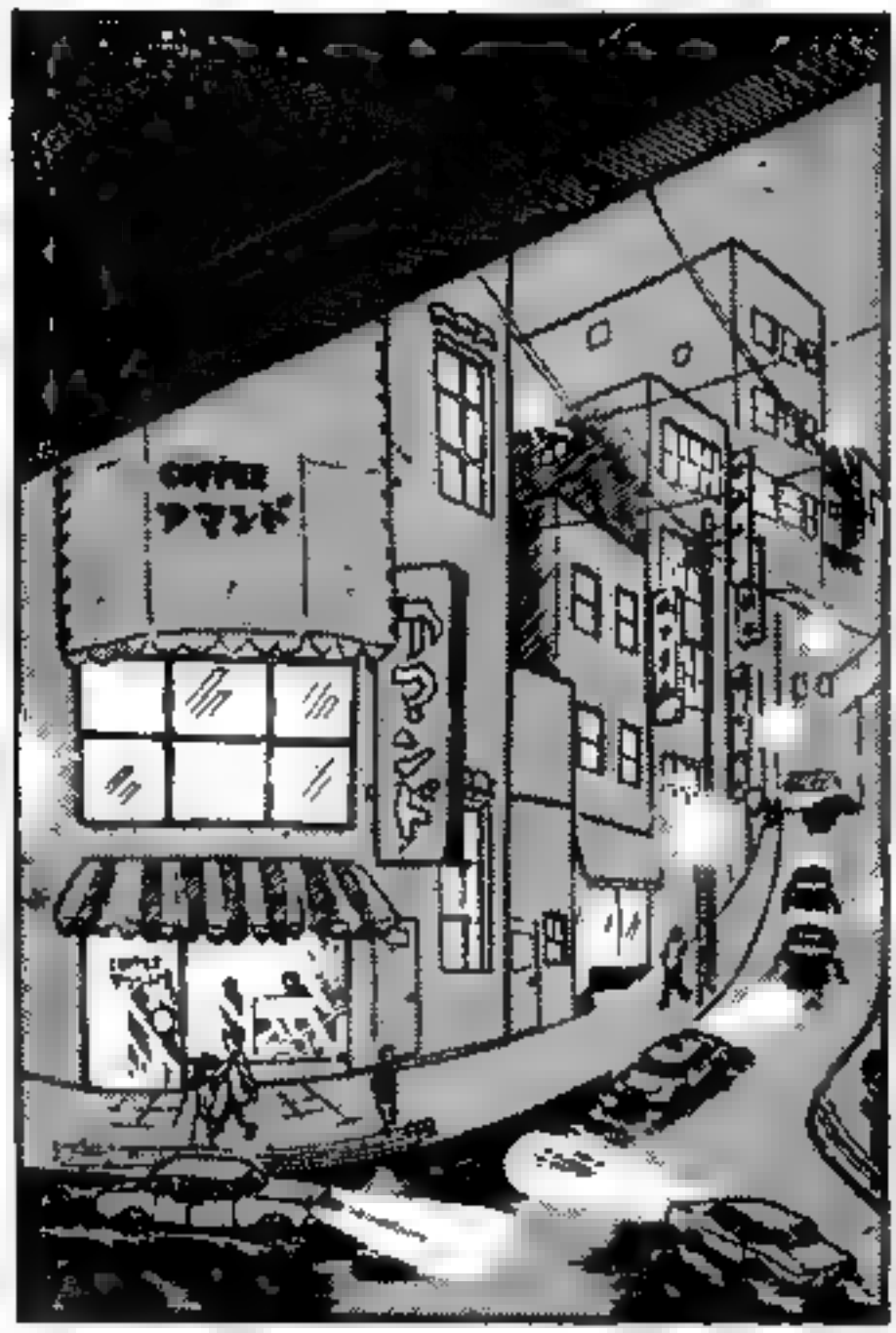

THAT COULD'VE BEEN A NICE SPARE...
OH, TOO BAD.


AND FROM HERE, IT'S ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR...
YOU'VE GOT TO START WITH YOUR HIPS DOWN A LITTLE LOWER AND THE BALL UP HERE.
YOU'VE GOT A NATURAL TALENT FOR SPORTS SO I'M SURE YOU CAN GET QUITE GOOD ONCE YOU GET THE TIMING DOWN.

LET'S HEAD BACK.
I'M DONE.
41
42
BUT WE'VE ONLY JUST STARTED.


BALLON


BALLON


COFFEE
アマンド

YOU'VE REALLY GOT NOTHING BUT BOXING IN YOUR MIND, DON'T YOU?

BEATS ME.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

JUST THINKIN' ABOUT WHY JOSÉ MENDOZA DECIDED TO SHOW UP.

WHAT'S THE MATTER? ...TIRED?

DON'T YOU THINK IT'S TIME TO HANG UP YOUR GLOVES?

YABUKI,

I DRAGGED YOU OUT OF THE BANQUET TONIGHT,

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH,

BUT IT SEEMS MY EFFORTS WERE FUTILE.

AFTER SEEING HOW ABSORBED YOU WERE WITH JOSÉ MENDOZA.

NORIKO? WHO'S SHE?

GUESS WOMEN ARE ALL THE SAME, AREN'T THEY...

'CAUSE YOU SAID THE EXACT SAME THING AS NORIKO.

WHY, WHAT'S SO FUNNY?

OH, HER...

OH YOU'VE MET HER BEFORE. YOU KNOW, THE GIRL WHO WAS DOING THE LAUNDRY THAT TIME YOU CAME BY.

THANK YOU FOR COMING.

IT'S GETTING A LITTLE TOO NOISY. LET'S LEAVE.

BUT I FELT A SHIVER RUN DOWN MY SPINE THEN.

I MAY NOT KNOW WHY JOSÉ MENDOZA CAME BY TODAY,

CAN WE PLEASE TALK SERIOUSLY?

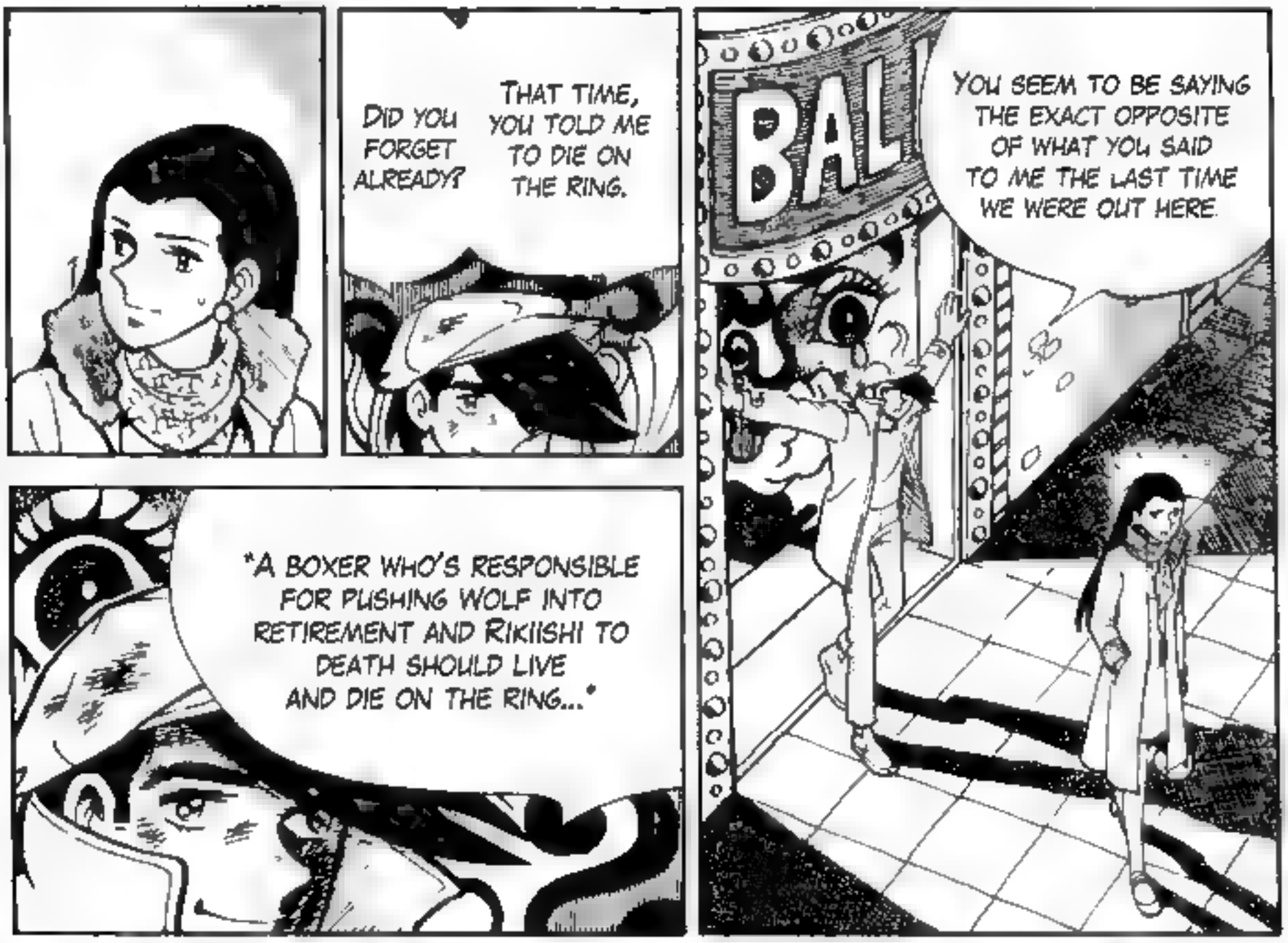
HA, A GRIM REAPER TAKING ANOTHER GRIM REAPER AWAY?

THE GRIM REAPER? THAT'S MY NICKNAME Y'KNOW.

HE LOOKED LIKE A GRIM REAPER WHO CAME TO DRAG YOU FAR, FAR AWAY...

IT'S CHILLING.

WHEN I LOOK AT YOU, I'M REMINDED OF AN INJURED BEAST JUST SEARCHING FOR A PLACE TO LIE DOWN AND DIE...


DID YOU FORGET ALREADY?
THAT TIME, YOU TOLD ME TO DIE ON THE RING.
BAL
YOU SEEM TO BE SAYING THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF WHAT YOU SAID TO ME THE LAST TIME WE WERE OUT HERE.
"A BOXER WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR PUSHING WOLF INTO RETIREMENT AND RIKIISHI TO DEATH SHOULD LIVE AND DIE ON THE RING..."
BALLUN
I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT ANYMORE.
STOP.
Coffee

SEE YA LATER THEN.

IT'S FINE, THE TRAINS ARE STIL RUNNING.

I'LL DROP YOU OFF THEN.

STAYING OUT TOO LATE'S GONNA AFFECT MY TRAINING ROUTINE.

I'LL HEAD HOME NOW.

YES!

DAILY MORNING SPORTS

UNEXPECTED GUEST AT BANQUET HELD FOR YABUKI JOE

JOSÉ MENDOZA (BANTAMWEIGHT WORLD CHAMPION) SHOWS UP AS ABRUPTLY AS HE DISAPPEARS.

DID HE DROP BY WHILE TRAVELLING ON A WHIM? MENDOZA SPENT ONLY 3 HOURS BEFORE FLYING BACK HOME.

TALK ABOUT UNPREDICTABLE.
SO HE JUST SHOWED UP FOR THE KICKS?
WE MANAGED TO GET A SHORT INTERVIEW WITH HIM AT THE HANEDA AIRPORT JUST BEFORE HIS FLIGHT, AND HE SEEMED QUITE INTERESTED IN YABUKI.

IS PRETTY MUCH ACCEPTED AS A MATTER OF FACT OVERSEAS, SO I GUESS EVEN THE CHAMPION HAD TO TAKE NOTE.
THAT WHOLE CONJECTURE ABOUT CARLOS RIVERA BECOMING BROKEN TO A JAPANESE BOXER EVEN BEFORE HIS WORLD TITLE MATCH,

HE DECIDED TO DROP BY AND SEE WHAT KIND OF MAN THIS YABUKI WAS...

SO WHILE TRAVELLING,

A KO-WIN STREAK TO BOOT AS WELL, HIS INTEREST MUST'VE BECOME MORE AND MORE PIQUED.

NOT ONLY THAT, AFTER HEARING HOW JOE SOON WENT ON A WINNING STREAK,

HE'S GOT NO SELF-CONFIDENCE.

TALK ABOUT ONE NERVOUS WORLD CHAMP.

DOESN'T SEEM THAT WAY TO ME.

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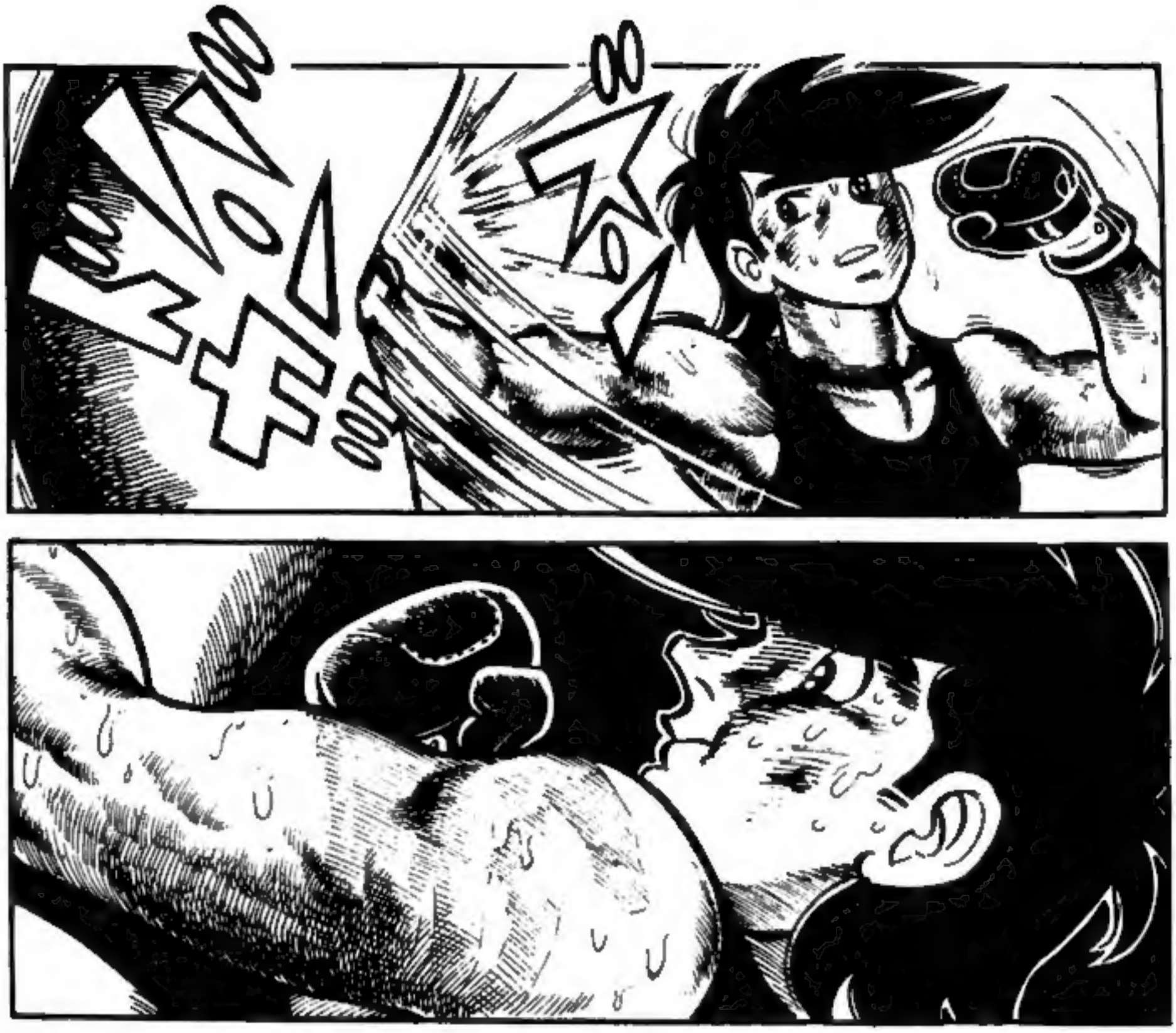
NEVER MIND WHAT I SAID.
NO,

JOE, ARE YOU-

I WAS JUST TALKIN' TO MYSELF.
I SAID NEVER MIND.



〔第14巻　おわり〕

CLEANING: HAPPYSCANS
TRANSLATOR: HOX
TYPESETTERS: ARLES, CHESTNUT,
CRAZY_HORSE

あなたは、この本を読んで、どんな感想をおもちになりましたか。

編集部では、この本についての読者のみなさまのご意見をおまちしています。

このつぎには、どんな作家のどんな漫画を読みたいと、お考えですか。「KCデラックス」にしてほしいと思う作品がありましたら、「読後の感想」とあわせて、左記あてに、どしどしお知らせください。

東京都文京区音羽二丁目二番二号
〈郵便番号一一二〉
アベニュー音羽　3F
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